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THE NARRATIVE ART OF CHAUCER

BY

MARY LAVENIA BECK

B. S. Coe College, 1908.

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

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PREFACE

It is the purpose of this paper to form an estimate of the narrative art of Chaucer, which shall be the result of a study of its relation to the life and literature of the Middle Ages, and a comparison with present day principles of writing. Accordingly, the first chapter has been devoted to a discussion of Short Story art, and the second to a survey of Mediaeval fiction, both of which are preliminary to the main topic.

For information upon the first topic, this paper has leaned rather heavily upon Professor Brander Matthews' "The Philosophy of the Short-Story," and Mr. Walter Pitkin's "The Art and Business of Short Story Writing." The "Epic and Romance" of Mr. W. P. Ker, and "The Epic and Ballad" of Mr. Walter Morris Hart have been especially helpful in developing the second topic.

The author gratefully adknowledges her indebtedness to Dr. H. S. V. Jones for class notes taken in his course on the "English Ballads and Metrical Romances" and "Chaucer and His Contemporaries." She wishes also to express her appreciation of Dr. Jones' careful corrections and helpful suggestions during the preparation of this paper.

M. L. B.

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CHAPTER I

SHORT STORY ART

Nearly every age has had its favorite form of literature. The age of Shakespeare developed the drama; the age of Dryden, the essay. And in the present century, men of letters are lending their efforts chiefly to short story writing.

Its conciseness and brevity have gained for the short story a wonderful vogue with the readers of this busy era. Consequently, the phenomenal demand created by its popularity has encouraged into the lists of short story authorship scores of aspirants. In their train critics have followed, intent upon safe-guarding against the dangers of the new enthusiasm, the best interests of literature. As a result of the recent trend, the last fifty years have witnessed a remarkable out-put of creative and critical material produced in the interest of this latest literary favorite. In fact, so thoroughly has the ground been covered in this field of art; so perfect and so exacting are the laws of construction laid down by its zealous devotees, that short story writing has become, in nineteenth century letters, almost a cult.

Professor Brander Matthews of Columbia may be looked upon as the originator of the new cult, and upon his theories are grounded its articles of faith. He has been the first scholar to deal with the short story as a distinct literary type. In his "Philosophy of the Short-story," published in 1901, he argues convincingly

that it is a literary genre; that it is not an off-shoot of the novel; not an expansion of the episode or anecdote; that it fulfils a mission distinctly its own and obeys principles of structure peculiar to its nature. By his spelling of short story with the capital "S" and the hyphen between its two component parts, he has given it a stamp of individuality which he insists its character justifies.

Working in accord with Professor Matthews' philosophy, thus briefly sketched, prominent scholars have brought out numerous books and articles discussing the art of the short story, and setting forth rules for its construction. No signal contribution has been added, however, to the general fund of knowledge on the subject, since Professor Matthews' publication in 1901. His views in regard to the main characteristics of this literary genre, and its leading narrative essentials, may, therefore, be accepted as authoritative.

Near the beginning of his treatise, Professor Matthews states the underlying principles of short story art in the following terms: "In fact, it may be said that no one has ever succeeded as a writer of Short-stories who had not ingenuity, originality and compression; and that most of those who have succeeded in this line had also the touch of fantasy." Continually, throughout the discussion he recurs to these principles, and near the end concludes with, "But the chief requisites are compression, originality and ingenuity, and now and again a touch of fantasy." He does not explain these requisites in detail, nor does he more than merely indicate their bearing upon the story elements of plot, characterization, and setting. Such a task belongs to a more exhaustive and technical

discourse, and has, in fact, received adequate treatment from the pens of such men as Mr. Walter Pitkin[1] or Mr. Henry Seidel Canby.[2] Professor Matthews has merely wished to impress upon his readers the fact, that ingenuity, originality, and compression, and a touch of fantasy are the principles which have given the short story its distinction; the principles which the writer of short stories, with due regard for form and style, must still recognize as the fundamentals of his art.

These fundamentals in their more minute bearing upon story structure have been carefully expounded within the pages of the writers mentioned above. Very explicit suggestions are there made for the management of plot, characterization and setting. A very comprehensive idea of the characteristic requirements of the short story cult will therefore be gained from a brief résumé of its rules, as they relate to the three obvious elements of the narrative form.

Plot is essential to the short story, but it is the simple, brief, plot which is characteristic of this literary species. Compression then, or, as it has been variously termed, condensation, or the suppression of irrelevant matter, is the first requisite in dealing with plot. In order to attain the "single effect" of Maupassant or the "totality of Poe, the author must choose a simple scheme, shorn of unnecessary episodes, and capable of rapid, vigorous treatment and satisfactory development within the usual short story limit. Furthermore, a brief plot, if it make the appeal that it should, must be unique. A novelist with a commonplace scheme may win success merely by virtue of plenty of time for explanation

[1] "The Business and the Art of Short-story Writing."
[2] "The Short Story in English."
(For an extended list of works bearing on The Short Story, see Bibliography.)

and leisurely, natural development. But the short story writer, if he would succeed, must resort to artifice. In order to offset the disadvantages of his meager time allotment, he must arouse interest by the unusual character of his plot. This task, not the easiest, calls for inventive powers. And experience has shown that where originality and ingenuity are lacking, success in plot-making for the short story is an impossibility. It must be added, also, that a touch of fantasy, though not always necessary, is the magic to which many of the masterpieces owe their chief charm.

But however rightly conceived is his story idea, if the writer fail to realize it for his readers in a dramatic manner, he has violated a prime article of his faith. "An idea logically developed,"[1] "a climatic sequence of events:"[2] such a conception of the real nature of plot lays much of the burden of responsibility for good writing upon plot conduct. The writer, then, must exercise his ingenuity to achieve a climax. He must know how and when to introduce the first hint of the complication, in order that he may catch the reader's interest at the out-start. And, in order to hold that interest, and excite it to the proper pitch, he must be acquainted with innumerable artificial ways and means. He must be able to use acceleration and retardation for simulating swift action and gradated effects. Finally, his dénouement and conclusion must follow the climax easily and naturally as if a part of what has preceded. The writer who allows himself to be guided by these infallible laws, not forgetting a touch of fantasy now and again,

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[1] "Philosophy of the Short-Story." Brander Matthews.

[2] "The Art and Business of Short-story Writing." W. Pitkin.

to save him from mere mechanics, has his face set in the right direction.

He will not,however, advance far on the road to success in story-craft, now-a-days, without a careful regard for characterization. Many stories have stood on the merits of plot alone, supported by a scant background, or none at all, and by almost automaton figures. But while plot is still the first essential in short story art, the chief interest of the reader in this analytical age, has shifted to the hero and heroine. That Mr. Henry James' psychological stories, extreme as they are in character analysis, have gained so large a following, is sufficient to indicate the general direction of popular taste. The ambitious writer accordingly must look well to his characterization.

The choice of characters should be a carefully selective process, calling into play again the author's powers of compression, originality, ingenuity and fantasy. In the first place, there must be but few characters. Professor Matthews and Professor Esenwein,[1] following the letter of the French classical unities, insist that there be but one. Other authorities are not insistent upon this point, but all are agreed that the story shall be told from the point of view of only one of the characters, if singleness of effect is to be preserved.

In the second place the characters must be unique. Since the hero or heroine has so short a time to make the acquaintance of his readers, he must needs have all the support of a striking personality to command their interest at first sight. There is no

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[1] "Writing the Short Story."

time to trifle with a colorless character, nor even with colorless moments in the life of an otherwise interesting character. The individual who is not constantly striking or remarkable, or at the least, constantly interesting, is out of place in the economy of the short story.

If a "good character, like a good story has a point,"[1] then the character, likewise with the story, requires dramatic treatment. The good writer selects one interesting conflict in his heroes' life; then a series of minor experiences bearing upon, and leading up to, the main action. He then telescopes these exciting moments. The indifferent happenings slide back from the foreground and the result is an experience which is a chain of remarkable circumstances. Conversation, as a matter of course receives similar treatment. So that everything short story people say, as well as everything they do, has a point. From this, it is obvious that they are not realistic. But the fact is worthy of note here, in order to vindicate once more, Professor Matthews' insistence upon "a touch of fantasy." For even the most realistic short story must employ idealistic methods in character portrayal.

It must not be inferred, however, that the characters of the modern story are mere fanciful creations. They are necessarily idealized,as we have seen. They are not people of the streets. But in the hands of a master they live. The author may be an adept in the use of pathos, humor, and the other human emotions, but it is his personal touch which gives his characters their individuality. In this opportunity of self-revelation afforded a writer,lies

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[1] Miss Albright. "The Short Story, its Principles and Structure."

the secret of the present vital interest in characterization.

Setting is the last consideration in short story composition. Yet, like characterization it has gained a marked popularity in recent years, the atmosphere story giving to it the place of chief importance. The leading function of setting, however, is implied in its name. It may fill that function in two ways: it may constitute an appropriate background either by harmonizing with the general spirit of the story, or by striking a contrast. In either case it is a mere accompaniment and must not be over-worked. Critics continually warn against over-emphasis of setting. In its role of following along after plot and character development to give the finishing touches, it is subject to the same general laws which govern the other two elements: suppression and proportionate distribution throughout the story so that it may aid or intensify, and not weaken, the total effect.

Such, in brief, is the plan of the story cult. It is very modern in tone and spirit, and very methodical. It bears the marks most characteristic of a highly sophisticated age: conscious art and the stamp of individuality. The deliberate artfulness of its rules would surely tend to turn out mere mechanical products: gems perfectly cut, but cold and spiritless. But the value which critics attach to the personal note in short-story writing, redeems the cult from mere mechanics. Each story that is really a gem shines with an individual luster reflected from the life of its writer.

But the essential principles of the nineteenth century short story cult, modern and sophisticated as they are, rest upon an antiquity dating from the earliest origins. A single story from

Hebrew history will be sufficient to show that short stories were known and appreciated before the era of Kipling. Where can one find a more simple, beautiful, and dignified story than that of the Moabitess Ruth, who left her home and kindred to be a solace to the lonely Naomi, and who, gleaning among the harvesters of her wealthy kinsman, Boaz, won his regard and became his wife and the mother of an illustrious line? No arguments are necessary to set forth the values of the story of Ruth, for it is recognized as one of the masterpieces of fiction. It does not stand alone in early literary history. But time will not permit of reference to the numerous other short stories of antiquity, many of which are old favorites with the present age.

The point of greatest significance here, is that short stories were told and told well, before the properly named "Age of the Short Story." A comparison between the popular stories of then, and now, will show that while the story craft is with us a veritable cult, with earlier peoples it was an unconscious art, impersonal in character, achieving its successes intuitively by its very artlessness.

CHAPTER II

NARRATIVE ART IN THE MIDDLE AGES

This chapter is intended to give a brief review of the narrative art of the Middle Ages. Such a task is indeed bewildering, dealing as it does with the great era of universal adjustments. From the general confusion, however, certain fairly distinct literary types emerge. A grouping of these types into epic, romance, and tale, will call some order out of chaos. For this classification, though somewhat liberal, embraces the multiform narrative fictions of these centuries. Therefore, I have thought it well for my discussion to follow such a classification, desregarding, where expedient, strict chronological order.

Epic poetry is the earliest recorded form of literature of the new nation. Germany[1] and the Northern countries[2] had their epics. But it was in England and France that heroic literature achieved its fullest development and enjoyed its greatest literary influence. In England, Beowulf, Waldere, and the Battle of Finnsburg comprise the total list of extant epics. In France, of all the original Chansons de Geste which we may believe from evidence, flourished in her Epic Age, the Chanson de Roland, alone, remains in any completeness of form. A study of Beowulf and the "Roland," the

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[1] "Hildebrandslied." (An incomplete account of a combat between father and son.) Das Nibelungenlied, besides various secondary epics, such as the Alexander Cycle.

[2] "Islendinga Saga." (History by Sturla of his own times.) Kalewala of Finland.

best representatives in this field of literature, will suffice for the deduction of epic principles. Beowulf, the oldest Germanic epic tells of the adventures of the hero Beowulf of the Geatish peoples, who, by his valor and prowess delivered the mead-hall of Hrothgar, king of the Danes, from the fen monsters, Grendel and his mother. The poem, though known as the Anglo-Saxon epic, is not national in tone. It commemorates the deeds, not of the nation, but of one man, who, moreover, is not an Anglo-Saxon, but a foreigner. But if it is remembered that Beowulf developed at a time of universal political disunion, when wandering champions were commonly honored in alien courts, it should not be difficult to reconcile this as the English Epic. The Chanson de Roland was inspired by the French patriotic regard for Charlemagne. It recounts the tragic death, at Roncesvalles, of Roland and his men, the rear-guard and flower of Charlemagne's army. The spirit of this poem is national, though the great emperor, thoroughly German in race and characteristics, was a borrowed hero. Here we are thrilled at the heroism, not of Roland alone, but of Roland and his peers. Their bravery, in the face of the Saracen foe, is the bravery of Frenchmen for France.

It is notable that these epics are not mere loose narratives of adventure, but that they show a marked dramatic unity. The proportion of the scheme of Beowulf, it it true, is disturbed by its dragon aftermath. But if we may except that incident, we find that the chief interest of each story centers about a conflict which has its highest point, its climax. In Beowulf this conflict is the struggle between the Geatish hero and the hall-oppressors, culminating in the conquest of Grendel's mother; in Roland it is the enmity

between Count Roland and Ganelon, his step-father, whose vengeful hate was responsible for the death of the brave leader of the rear-gard. Each of these conflicts, moreover, is so simple that it could well be treated in brief compass. But our unknown authors have chosen to evolve their themes in a leisurely fashion, elaborating here, adorning there, so that their finished work has an air of great comprehensiveness.

It may be inferred then, that plot is an essential of Epic art, while simple plot, elaborately developed, is one of its leading features. It is further clear, from the study of Beowulf and Roland, that dignity is also characteristic of heroic plot. I do not mean that a code of rules imposed this, among other artificial requirements, upon the epic poet, but that dignity of action, peculiar to all heroic ages, naturally marks all true heroic poetry. So that "epic dignity" has become a stock term of literary parlance. This dignity in all epics as well as in those under our notice has its source principally, in two conditions: an historic basis, and a proximity in time to the events celebrated. Beowulf is founded upon the merest kernel of reality, the hero and his deeds being pure myth. But the Hygelac, of whom Beowulf was the nephew and avenger, has been identified with King Chochilaicus, mentioned by Gregory of Tours, who was killed while fighting against the Frisians at some between 515-520. This bit of history is sufficient to give the poem the necessary note of solidity. For history concerns the epic composer only in so far as it lends probability to his story. Reenforcing this atmosphere of probability, is the convincing manner in which customs, events and the concerns of life are reccunted. In

Roland, actuality plays a more considerable role than in Beowulf, the main characters having a historic entity, and the conflict being a real battle whose date is known.[1] On the other hand, the French poem is perhaps farther distant from its inciting episodes than is Beowulf, though not too far to lose the genuine epic ring. So much results from actual contact with the age celebrated. It is not secondary information but the voice of experience which speaks with such sincere dignity in these early literatures.

The characters of an epic are consistent with the weight of its action. It is always the king, or his princes or nobles who slay all the dragons or conquer the enemy. Yet, this exalting of station, truly Aristotelian, was not learned at the feet of the great "Stagirite." Democratic in temperament though the Western peoples were, they were aristocratic in their loyalty to a chieftain. Therefore, we have the interesting situation of a popular epic applauded by the people for honoring rank and title. But the makers of heroic poetry did not stop with rank and title. Their kings and nobles were men with real feelings and individualistic traits. Beowulf is good and kind, strong and brave,as a hero should be, but that he is more than a mere incarnation of virtues, the tributes of his friends and companions testify: Wiglof praises his thoughtfulness of his people (l. 3006), Hrothgar, his prudence and patience (l. 1705); the Queen, Wealhtheow, addresses him as "Beowulf leofa" (l. 1216). Besides the hero, other characters stand out from the crowd, but time will permit the mention of but one of them--Hunferth. One can clearly visualize his envious features as he meanly taunts Beowulf about his projected adventure:

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[1] Roncesvalles, Aug. 15, 778. Eginhard.

"Donne wene ic to pe wyrsan gepingea,
oeah pu heaoo-raesa gehwaer dohte,
grimre guoe, gif pu Grendles dearst
niht-longne fyrst nean bidan."

In Roland the characters are less complex than in Beowulf, though not less individualized. We do not require the poet to tell us, for instance, that "Rollanz est proz et Oliviers est sages." Truly, these poems have proved that "the success of epic poetry depends upon the author's power of individualizing and representing character."[1]

With setting this earnest hero poetry had less concern. Though we cannot conceive of Beowulf without its grand and sombre back ground: its murky nights; its weltering waves; and its few-- home of shadow-walkers, among "windy nesses," where the "surging waters" ascend "wan to the welkin," and the "wind stirs up hateful tempests." Indeed much of the dignity and lofty style of Beowulf are due to its artistic setting. The fact that Roland was managed, however, with slight regard for atmosphere, is proof that ~~it~~ this was not a vital element of epic structure. The achievement of Beowulf in this field, shows the extraordinary progress of its author in the direction of the "grand sytle." It must be noted here, that the atmosphere of the epic shows decidedly romantic touches. The fanciful, "high are the hills and dark are the valleys," of Roland is especially interesting as prophetic of the spirit of the already dawning chivalric literature.

Did the scope of this paper permit, much more could be said of the progress of the epic in narrative art: of its suggestive-

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[1] "Epic and Romance." W. P. Kerr.

ness; of its tricks of suppression and repetition, for effect. Many interesting inferences could be drawn from its discrepancies, also. But this hasty view is sufficient to reveal its general position in regard to the principles of good writing. We have seen that the epic has plot; that it shows an understanding, however crude, of dramatic methods; that its characters have personality; that setting, where employed, is artistic. Such remarkable literary proficiency at so early an age seems almost incredible, until we recall the peculiar advantages of the epic era: virile activity, honesty, simplicity, sincerity--a straightforwardness of life which served as a determinant of the nature of its literature.

That other question: how shall we account for the style, the comparative polish of epic literature? will justify the discussion of ballads in this connection. No one knows where ballads originated, nor precisely when, but it is now the generally accepted theory that they antedate the literature of art; that they are the communal production of the folk. Professor Walter Morris Hart[1], with other scholars, has indicated an evolution of the epic, pioneer in literary poetry, from these crude folk songs through the successively more complex border ballad, Robin Hood ballad, Adam Bell type, Gest of Robin Hood and heroic ballad. In the light of this knowledge, ballad structure has taken on great significance for the student of narrative art. But since it is the object of this paper merely to discover the norm of composition to which the several types

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[1] "Ballad and Epic." (A Study in the Development of Narrative Art.) Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature. Vol. 11.

of Mediaeval literature conformed, it can do no more than indicate the relation between ballad and epic, and, consequently between ballad and the literature of narrative in general. Perhaps popular intuition blazed the trails which led to the grand highway in literary art.

Crudity distinguishes ballad narrative, but also as Mr. Hart has pointed out, does a naive art. Love, valor, and the supernatural, constitute the burden of the balladists' song. Its chief interests are narrow, though increasing in scope as it approached the epic ideal. Composed by a group, for the pleasure of that group whose familiarity with the story could brook omissions, ballad structure acquired an abrupt form. Gaps in the story, unassigned speeches, and evading of climax do not conduce to literary finish. Yet, by virtue of folk enthusiasm, these faults often assumed the air of virtue, albeit at the expense of smoothness. Lack of explanation, for instance, often lends an air of suggestiveness that is very effective, as in "Clark Colven." While he and his "gay ladie" were walking in the "garden green," she warned him to beware the mermaiden whom he had evidently deserted for her. The warning was to no avail, for, "he's forgotten his gay ladie

And away with the fair maiden."

Immediately following these lines, with no explanation, we have

"Ohon, alas! says Clark Colven
A aye sae sair's I mean my head!"
And merrily leugh the mermaiden
"O win on till you be dead."

Between the lines we must read the vengeance the sea-nymph had upon

her lover. These same lines show, in the relation between mermaid and knight, a tacit acceptance of the supernatural, typical of folk poetry. They further illustrate a dramatic directness in their manner of inserting discourse without transition or explanation. These lines from "Hind Etin" illustrate the speech without the introductory "he says," or "she says":

"A question I would ask ye father
Gin ye wouldna angry be:"
"Say on, say on my bonny boy,
Ye'se nae be quarrel'd by me."

In "Sir Patrick Spens" we have the tragic climax common to the ballad. But here, as almost invariably, we must visualize the actual tragedy for ourselves. We know that Sir Patrick and his men were drownded for,

"O lang lang may their ladies sit
We thair fans into thair hand,
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the land."

We could multiply examples to show the use of suspense, of tragic contrast, of frequent climactic sequences and incremental repetitions which are truly modern in their effect. But we have aimed merely to show the striking directness of this unconscious form of art. Its neglect of characterization and setting are significant. The folk sang of that which interested them chiefly, the story. Character analysis, explanation, and interpolation, they left to a more reflective literature. That this task was well started in the heroic age, we have seen from our study of Epic structure.

But with the twelfth century came a change which altered the trend of narrative art. Not in a day nor a year but slowly and irretrievably the old order passed. The tendency now, was away from the simplicity and homogeneity of heroic times. Society became more complex. The feudal system developed an amazing intricacy. No longer might be seen the old familiarity between lord and thegn of the age of Beowulf. A growing desire for change and adventure found outlet in the crusades. From the contact thus established with the orient, came back a wave of magic and marvel. Catching this impulse, the latent romance of the west, long impatient for expression, broke bounds and over-spread all Europe. The Heroic Age gave place to the Age of Romance; and the songs of heroes, to the tales of chivalrous knights.

Consequently, narrative art, after the twelfth century led a diversified existence. It no longer served in the dignified but simple role of honoring martial valor. Now, it must celebrate arms and religion and capricious ladies. No longer the mead-hall, but now, the chivalric court, or more often, a lady's bower was the bar of judgment. Thither came the gay <u>jongleur</u> or the gleeman with all manner of ambitious efforts: long tales of love and adventure; short tales--lays, legends, <u>marchen</u>, instinct with color, wonder and passion. The approval of the fair Mediaeval judge, however, does not guarantee the narrative soundness of the stories to which she was pleased to attend. That modern critics should find these stories faulty, hearing them under less felicitous conditions, bereft of their Mediaeval accompaniments of tone, look, and gesture of the gay minstrel poet, is not strange. For, unlike the epic, they are

the expression of a time of great artificiality, albeit of a time of splendor and of much worth. It is not the intention here to draw sharp distinctions either between classes of romance or between romances of different lands. But, in order to discern the effect upon narrative art, of the new influences, we may glance at King Horn, Havelock, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and the Gest of Robin Hood in England; at the tales of Chrestien de Troyes and Reynard the Fox, in France, as representatives of different phases of the longer romance.

Havelock and King Horn represent the more popular romance in which the old time delight in heroic valor had not completely merged into the courtly ideal. Their manner has, therefore, somewhat of epic vigor and sturdiness. Yet their plots show conclusively their romantic nature. Instead of bearing the story directly to a climax, the plot conducts the hero through a maze of marvelous adventure. Here we have the key-note to courtly literature: a plot fanciful and involved. No longer bound by considerations of poetic probability or of poetic structure, the story strayed into whatever fantastic by-way it chose. In fact the longest way to the point of the story was the favorite way of romance. Havelock, before coming into his rightful kingship passes through the most wonderful adventures: cast out by his guardian to be drowned, he is spared because of a magic flame which proceeds from his mouth, and a king's mask on his shoulder. Working as a menial in a noble's household, he gains fame for his athletic prowess, and is therefore selected by an intriguing guardian as a husband for his royal charge; but he is spared the princess' scorn and granted his kingdom at last, by vir-

tue of the magic flame and the king's mark on his shoulder. Such was the type of plot peculiar to the Mediaeval narrative, although a few, notably the Celtic tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, show admirable proportions. This story tells of the proving of Sir Gawain, as the outcome of a challenge made at Arthur's court by an unknown knight. The interest turns on a fanciful motif: the stranger's vow to receive unharmed, a blow from Gawain, provided he in turn, will submit to receiving a like blow, within a year's time. But the caprice of the theme does not entangle in romance the thread of the story. It proceeds straight to the climax, Sir Gawain's reward for his bravery. But this, it must be remembered, was the exception to the general rule. For the plot of the romance was typically long-drawn-out.

This expansiveness of Mediaeval story fostered a host of artificialities. As though sensible of his short-comings, the minstrel poet seemed intent upon entrancing the minds of his hearers with the extravagant wooings of his lovers; with the variety and wonder of their escapades; with the eloquence of their speeches; with the perfection of their manners, lest perchance, some too inquiring mind might meet disillusionment while seeking deeper meanings. At times, however, the courtly entertainer lapsed from his conventionalities into real expression. This was frequently true of Chrestien de Troyes, the master of romance. In his story of Enid, for instance, he far transcends courtly ethics by honoring the relation of husband and wife as the true love relation, in contradistinction to the commonly recognized illicit love relation. Chrestien's expression is often sincere, and, as Mr. Kerr has shown, comparatively free from

the vanities of the age. Those who cannot find the beauties of chivalric poetry in the by-ways of meaner poets, will do well to turn to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and to the tales of Chrestien de Troyes. For in them we see a near approach to the ideals toward which the best impulse of the chivalric literature tended.

Characterization is markedly slighted in romance art. For the men and women who played the parts in chivalric story are mere types. Many of them, it is true,--Launcelot, Kay and Gawain, as Mr. Creek[1] has said, are so well drawn that they leave with us the impression of distict personality. Yet, generally speaking, they are stereotyped. The dramatis personae of romance seem to have been make up by a choice from set groups of Mediaeval people, according to the callings and classes required in the story. If a knight were needed, any knight of the group would serve, for all knights were brave and strong, gentle and courteous, just as all ladies were fair and "daungereuse." The anonymity of the makers of romance thus stamped itself indelibly upon the people of his narratives. But, although personality stood at such a discount in the Middle Ages, the human emotions were given full rein. And here is the one beauty of the knights and ladies of chivalric fiction: in them the sensibilities and passion of the age became idealized.

The Mediaeval love of external beauty, of display and of splendor found an admirable field for play in the background of its literature. This means of elaborating their themes, the courtly singers used well, and ill. It must be remembered that the men of

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[1] "A Study of the Narrative Art of Four Metrical Romances."

the Middle Ages had not learned the meaning of nature. To them it was intangible, a thing apart from their lives. Even Dante, the prime spirit of the era spoke of his native hills and mountains with a fearsome awe. It was but natural, then, that the setting of the most perfect tales of the period became more or less conventionalized. Even so, it accorded admirably with the fanciful character of the romance story. Could anything be more charming than the atmosphere of the tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight? The unknown knight who made his boast in Arthur's court was green and clad all in green; his hair falling in green locks over his shoulders; his steed was green, with trappings of green studded with gems of the same hue; the chapel where Sir Gawain kept his tryst was green and everything thereabout; he returned to Arthur's court with a trophy of green lace, a secret gift from the lady of the strange knight; and after the knights of the Round Table had listened to his adventure, they agreed to wear a baldric of green for the sake of Sir Gawain. The beauty, or rather, the sustained beauty, of this background is the exception, rather than the rule in Mediaeval story structure. It needs no example to show how setting became enslaved to over-elaboration and to set phrases, so that it came to lose all beauty and freshness.

Contemporary with the romances of chivalry, we have, "Reynard the Fox," and "The Gest of Robin Hood," stories which resulted from the reaction upon thoughtful minds, of the false ideals of the age. Although the tone of these productions is far inferior to the high ideals of the Arthurian legends, yet they are of immense significance in the evolution of literature. Their satire is

a just condemnation of the follies to which chivalry had stooped; it is also indicative of a much needed element in the literature of the era. The reflective mind as it began to assert its powers of judgment in the social satires of the time was the fit agent to straighten out the tangle of romantic intricacies.

We come now to the briefer type of chivalric story, the tale. It may be discussed briefly, since it took color, in the main, from the same influences which, we have discovered, conduced to the growth of the more prolix story. There is, however, a decided difference between the narrative structures of the two forms. The romance is generally recognized as the progenitor of the romantic novel, while the tale has a decidedly more artistic character, tending rather to the short story. Therefore my reason for placing the tale last in the ranks of Mediaeval literature, as nearest of kin to finished narrative art.

Similar to the romance in subject-matter but shorter, and, therefore more clear cut is the lai. Marie de France is the poetess par excellence in this realm of verse. Her themes are unoriginal, many of them coming from Breton sources. They are therefore, often identical with those of contemporary romances. But in many cases they are much more readable. The modern reader, uninitiated into Mediaeval literature, can understand and enjoy the lais of Marie de France, though completely bewildered by the romance.

Less literary, perhaps, than the lai, but showing even more compression and unity, is the legend. The legend was commonly told of a saint, or of one who was under the protection of a saint. Owing their existence to a didactic motive, legends were often bur-

dened with moralizing. The very didacticism by which they were enslaved, however, conduced to their narrative value, in as much as the holy fathers knew the value of a terse story in moral teaching. These Contes devot, or legends, comprised a rich field of material for the purely literary story-teller.

The Mediaeval realm of magic and "faerie" found voice in the märchen. Here were found in brief compass the marvels and wonders which crowded the long romances. It is easy to recognize in the märchen oriental influence, yet that there were European fairies, the enchanting collections of Grimm and Hans Christien Andersen testify.

Seemingly without claim to recognition among Mediaeval literary types is the fabliau. It came of bourgeois origin and catered to bourgeois tastes. Yet I have chosen to give it a place at the close of the ranks of polite literature, next in line to Chaucer. Its subject matter, as just indicated was coarse, even vulgar. Yet so excellent was its narrative art that this consideration slone has won for it the respectful regard of many scholars.[1] The jongleur who told the fabliau, had always a single object in view. If he could make his listeners laugh, he was satisfied with his story. It was a nice art, and that not the easiest, to achieve this end. The jongleur, therefore, chose a clever plot, generally of intrigue, preferably, of intrigue versus intrigue. He saw the story from beginning to end, relating its parts perfectly. He portrayed character in bits of dialogue and discriptive personal touches. He elab-

[1] Hart. "Art of the old French Fabliau." (Kittredge Anniversary Papers.)

J. Bedier. "Les Fabliaux du Moyen Age."

orated to a certain extent and employed clever devices to bring out the point of his jokes. In order that he might thoroughly enjoy the discomforture of his victims, he learned the knack of moralizing, in a tantalizing manner upon the sure deserts of sin. It is this ability to stand off and comment upon his own creation, that marks the skill of the jongleur. It is the same reflective spirit which we discovered in Robin Hood and Reynard. This self-conscious attitude, joined to his native abilities enabled the bourgeois jester to create a type of story which shows conscious art.

We may draw the general conclusion, from this survey of Mediaeval narrative, that principles of construction were known to its composers, though they were not well applied. Ballad and epic art gave great literary promise, it is true, when arrested in its advance by the dawning romantic era. But the poetry of romance was the despair of rules of good structure. It, however, accomplished the very valuable service of emancipating the imagination from its epic prejudices. In the capacity of thus giving birth to Professor Matthews' "touch of fantasy," it has probably more than atoned for its short-comings. The notable lack of this period was the personal touch, which, alone, could invest the "skeleton" of narrative art with its "proper flesh and clothing."[1]

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[1] Encyclopedia Brittanica. Vol. XXIII. "Romance."

CHAPTER III

CHAUCER'S NARRATIVE ART

It is clear that the personal note was the supreme literary lack of the Middle Ages. Concerning Italy this statement would require modification, for Italy, it will be recalled, lay on the sunny slope of the Alps. But with the exception of a few names, "Anonymous" is the invariable subscription to the great mass of fiction of the Western countries. Consequently, as the preceding chapter has made manifest, narrative art held a rudderless course throughout the twelfth, thirteenth, and the first half of the fourteenth centuries. We have seen, however, that the trend of romantic literature was not unattractive; that with a pilot at the helm it might have led to a veritable land of delight. The Pearl, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, are indicative of what might have been accomplished by English talent alone, had the unknown author of these gems of romance possessed the courage to stand out from the mists of his obscurity and work under the impetus of conscious personal power. But no preeminent poet of romance arose in England as the relentless centuries bore on. Crécy, the generally regarded landmark between the old order and the new, was fought in 1346. According to the most authentic records, the year 1340 was the birth year of Geoffrey Chaucer, successively bourgeois citizen, king's squire, courtly diplomat, man of business, and, first and last, poet nonpareil of Mediaeval England. Was it Chaucer, then, for whom the

romance narrative in England had been long waiting; was it he who should cover its too prominent skeleton with the proper "flesh and clothing;"[1] who should bring the chivalric ideal to its flower in literature? We shall see.

If Chaucer was born in 1340, his advancing years were coincident with the swelling of the first great wave of national feeling which swept over Europe. For the battle of Crécy in 1346 awakened the new nations from their long dream. "The whole social and political fabric of the Middle Ages rested on a military base, and its base was suddenly withdrawn. The churl had struck down the noble; the bowman proved more than a match, in sheer hard fighting, for the knight. From the day of Crécy, feudalism tottered slowly, but surely to its grave."[2] This new national spirit incident to the downfall of feudal aristocracy, expressed itself in England in the mutual approach of nobles and commonality toward a more democratic union. Called upon to share the heavy expenses incurred in the French wars, the masses willingly complied in the demand upon condition of the granting of certain privileges. The House of Commons, therefore, became increasingly important as a legislative body. The people began to feel the government need of them. Remembering the lesson of Crécy the nobles wisely recognized the rising power of the gentry, and, more reluctantly, of the peasant classes. It was not a long step, therefore, toward the meeting and final fusion into one people, of the variant races and social orders of Mediaeval England.

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[1] Encyclopedia Brittanica. V. XIII. "Romance."

[2] J. R. Green. "A Short History of the English People."

This ideal culmination of patriotic impulses was not reached, however, without the social, religious and political evils usually attendant upon great transitions. The false ideals of the crumbling feudal order, shorn of the romantic trappings in which the "Age of Faith" had accepted them, appeared now, to awakening consciences, insupportable. And indeed, these false ideals, wretched off-spring of an order whose hand had grown powerless to control them, had conduced to a social depravity far removed from the real spirit of chivalry. Small wonder that Langland, with men of like intent, should employ the most cutting satire in order to whip into line the degenerate tendencies of England's "field full of folk."

This is a cursory view of the new national movement whose beginnings Chaucer's early years witnessed, and whose developing interests would naturally command a certain amount of his attention in later life. In an age so fraught with vital concerns, as was the fourteenth century in England, thinking men and women do not choose an indifferent course. They are constrained to adopt an attitude toward the questions of the day. In a study of Chaucer's narrative art, an understanding of his point of view in regard to the Mediaeval standards is, therefore, essential. Whether he reverted to romance ideals and became, in truth, the laureate of the chivalric court; whether, inflamed at the degeneracy of the out-worn system, he engaged his pen against the enemies of his country's morals, or whether he honored, like Lawrence Minot, his country's rising greatness, are questions which must be asked and answered, before one can enter into the real spirit of Chaucer's stories.

To the casual reader Chaucer's poetry as a whole has a

decidedly chivalric character. His pages, with their knights and ladies and courly love are redolent of romance. But of course there is much of Chaucer's work that conveys a quite different meaning. Romance had waited in vain if it had looked for its champion in Chaucer. For one who could so cleverly hold up to light its shallowness and frivolity could never become the poet par excellence of knight-errantry.

With his sensitive spirit and broad knowledge of men and affairs, Chaucer would naturally be expected to enter the lists of reformers in literature. In his diplomatic capacity he became conversant with the leading issues of his time, and in his twelve years' service in the comptroller-ship, he came into contact with "every maner wight." Rich and poor, prince and peasant, luxuricus monk and begging friar, all passed beneath his quiet notice. Surely not Langland himself, understood more thoroughly the conditions of life of fourteenth century England. Nor could Langland have been more sensitive to the miseries and fraud everywhere prevalent in the make-up of this complex age. Chaucer's power of delineating so perfectly characters like the thieving miller or the hypocritical pardoner, is evidence of his knowledge of current evils. Moreover, this undercurrent of feeling appears in his literary work, in an occasional impatient rebuke of baseness from his own lips. Yet, withal, Chaucer did not feel impelled to preach in behalf of justice and right. He was content to leave to Wycliff and to Langland the duties of reform.

It was the artistic phase of Mediaeval life which made its strongest appeal to Chaucer. Thus we have the key-note of his poe-

try. Neither primarily an exponent of courtly literature, nor a reformer of the fourteenth century, he yet drew from both fields, materials for his literary work-shop. That "daungereuse" ladies and knights "secree" bear so prominent a role in Chaucer's stories, does not signify that he was enamored of courtly standards. The fact is merely a testimony to his literary connoisseurship. He saw in the Middle Ages richness and variety of tone and color, splendor of life, and beautiful and fanciful ideals. It is significant of his motive, that, in portraying Mediaeval models, he did not draw them line for line, feature for feature, as he actually saw them in their surroundings. He either chose the ideal or redeemed the harsh reality with some saving touch of humor or humanity: "he was a verray parfit gentil knight;" "And certainly he was a good felawe;" "he was the beste beggere in his hous." It is further significant that his characters did not always act in strict accordance with the customary code of ethics of their respective orders. They were real people with reflective powers, whose judgment often-times led them into gross violation of conventions. It was not Chaucer's aim to give a faithful picture of his age. He wrote, because writing afforded an artistic mode of expression for his abundant personality. His poetry, then, inasmuch as it reflects his individuality is of universal and eternal interest, though clad in local garb. Chaucer is not, therefore <u>the</u> poet of the Middle Ages but a poet <u>in</u> the Middle Ages.

We now understand Chaucer's attitude toward his era: as a moral man he disapproved of much that he saw there; as a literary man, he saw in its romantic phase, literary possibilities which had

been shamefully abused. It is now time to come to the chief consideration of this paper, Chaucer's narrative method. Knowing well, his propensity for expressing through the medium of his characters his own feelings, and, indeed, often voicing in their speeches a sentiment of his own, he recognized that Mediaeval narrative art was inadequate to the needs of his genius. He had, then, to fall back upon his own resources. If he, like Shakespeare, chose to be dependent upon sources for his stories, he was forced to become independent in his manner of narrating them. As a result of the conflict between the conventionalities of his age, and the demands made by his individuality, Chaucer became the creator of his own narrative art. Bearing in mind the discrepancies of the Mediaeval narrative, a contrast between Chaucer's art and the early art of the epic, and, again, between Chaucer's art and the art of the modern short story, we might justify the inference that the true narrative method preceeds from the efforts of the individual to find for itself fit expression. It shall be the object of the remaining pages of this paper to examine very briefly Chaucer's narrative art as it is exemplified in different groups of his poems, with a view to discovering in his methods, prophetic simularities to the methods of short story narrative art, of which I believe he was the pioneer.

CHAPTER IV

CHAUCER'S MINOR POEMS: A STUDY OF THE TRANSITIONAL STAGE OF HIS NARRATIVE ART

Chaucer, in the fulness of his powers is a distinctively modern poet. Yet there are considerations which forbid our judging him by modern standards, solely. In the first place, his genuis, as we have seen, emerged from the background of Mediaevalism, whose unfolding panorama of romantic ideals, courtly codes and customs, knightly warfare, and later, of fading chivalric splendor, presented an attractiveness to which he wisely yielded his literary faculties. However new his art, then, his subject matter was old. It was a case of pouring new wine into old bottles. In judging the "wine," therefore, we must take account of the "bottles." We cannot judge Chaucer's narrative art apart from a comparison with Mediaeval narrative art. This is not the place to discuss the beauty and appropriateness of Chaucer's subject matter. However that may be, we must admit that the nature of his material imposed limitations upon his art. It is not to his discredit if he falls short of the ideal in a field in which he is a pioneer. Whatever near approach he may make to modern standards in the matter of narrative economy, is the more remarkable, in view of the fact that in romance, the line of least resistance is in the direction of over-elaboration rather than of clear cut dramatic expression.

In the second place, while Chaucer's work in its entirety should not be regarded as transitional, yet his developing genius shows a transition. In his early years, for instance, he showed greater dependence upon his sources, and upon literary conventions, especially those of France. A later period, recognized by some scholars as his period of Italian influence, shows clearly growing dramatic ability, while his maturer years see the culmination of his powers. A just study of Chaucer's literary method must, therefore, not only bear in mind the effect upon it of Mediaeval ideals, but it must also give consideration to this evolution of his talent. It is my purpose to observe in my discussion an order which shall be roughly indicative of his unfolding genius, taking up first his Minor Poems, then in later chapters, Troilus and Criseyde, and the Canterbury Tales.

The Minor Poems.

In his early year, as we have said, Chaucer's genius was largely subservient to literary conventions. This subserviency is indicated by his very titles: "Romaunt of the Rose,""A Compleynt of Venus," "The Book of the Duchesse," "The Parlement of Foules," "The Legend of Good Women," etc. Heading the list of the poems of this period, we have the Roamunt of the Rose, a translation. Scholars, comparing Chaucer's version with the French original,[1] have found it a remarkably faithful reproduction. Yet Professor Lounsbury[2] has discovered in the middle of the translation, poetic depart-

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[1]A love allegory begun by Guillaume de Lorris and finished about fifty years after Lorris' death by Jean de Meun.

[2]Studies in Chaucer. Vol. II.

ures which are very Chaucerian. Most translators who digress from their model, he tells us, tend to elaborate their theme. But Chaucer[1] shows marked powers of compression and concise expression. It may be assuming too much to regard this as an early promise of Chaucer's greatness. But in other poems of this group, there are like suggestions that may be relied upon. For the purposes of this study I have chosen to consider the "Vision Poems," since there is in them an attempt at narrative structure.

Chaucer's vision poems, in their general atmosphere and plan, correspond very closely to the popular vision poem of romance. This type of literature, though originally sprung from classical sources[2] found its ideal in the French "Roman de la Rose." There was laid down its conventional pattern. A beautiful landscape with woods and flowers and sometimes a murmuring stream, formed the usual background of the love vision. A dreamer on the grassy slope of the stream was visited by beautiful other-world beings. Or, perchance a guide came to conduct him to strange and wonderful scenes. Fair departed ladies and lovely maidens of the Maytide were often present. The lady of the dreamer's heart was usually the central object of interest of the "Love Dream," while the god of love was master of ceremonies. Chaucer's "Book of the Duchesse," "Parlement of Foules," "Hous of Fame," and Legend of Good Women" turn on the vision theme. Yet, distinctly imitative as these poems are,

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[1] Professor George Lyman Kittredge in an article entitled "Authorship of the Romaunt of the Rose" in Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, advances the theory that with the exception of the first seventeen hundred lines, the authorship of the extant translation of the "Romaunt," cannot be credited to Chaucer.

[2] "Somnium Scipionis." Cicero.
"Ars Amatoris and Heroides." Ovid.

they reveal at the same time, interesting hints of their author's individuality. And, if studied in the order named, they show a marked evolution of his narrative art. So desultory are these touches, that a systematic study of the poems will not be justifiable in this paper. But we may notice particularly, his growing powers of characterization, his increasingly dramatic style, and the evolving of his delightful humor. By these means he made the "Vison Poems,"built upon a story-frame thoroughly romance in character, peculiarly his own.

The Book of the Duchesse.

This production, one of Chaucer's earliest, shows the marked influence upon him of French poetry. It would be difficult for the occasional reader of Chaucer to recognize in the Book of the Duchess the genius of the author of the Canterbury Tales. For the poem as a typical love vision does not, as a whole show the vigor of Chaucer's later works. The love-lorn knight, whom the dreamer discovers sitting with his back "y--turned to an oak," well nigh alienates our sympathies by the sheer length of his discourse. In a speech of seven hundred and fifty lines, uninterrupted save by his own heavy sighs, he expatiates upon the charms of his lady, and pours forth his sorrows into the ear of his commiserating listener.. Yet there are numerous fine strokes in the poem that plainly reveal the hand of the great story-teller. It is a signal mark of originality, for instance, that Chaucer has adapted the French love vision to an occasion, making of it an elegy on the death of Blanch, first wife of John of Gaunt. Furthermore, there is good characterization in the poem. When one remembers that the knights' description of

his lady is modelled upon the Mediaeval conventional catalogue of virtues, applicable to all fair women, and follows closely a passage from Machault, the skill with which the "gode, faire Whyte" is individualized, appears admirable. "Thereto her look was not a- syde. Ne overthwert, but beset so wel, Hit drew and took up every del, Alle that on hir gan biholde" (1: 860-865.) There was no wicked sign in her face, for,--"hit was sad and simple and benigne." (1: 918). Even these few lines seem to me to give a pretty fair insight into the character of the lady, and to place her in striking contrast to the colorless heroine of romance. There is a bit of dramatic[1] action near the end of the vision that is worth notice. We are well aware of the cause of the knight's sorrow, from his "compleynt" which attracts the attention of the dreamer. But he does not tell his sad secret in direct terms until he has finished his story. This suppression of the main interest until the close shows a sense of climactic arrangement. But the tense, brief dialogue in which the knight's loss is revealed, is truly tragic, and needs no explanation to bring out its dramatic qualities:

"She is deed!' 'Nay!' 'Yis, by my trouthe!'
'Is that your los? by god, hit is routhe!" (1: 1309-10)

The Parlement of Foules.

The chief interest of the Parlement of Foules, it seems to me, is its humor. Dr. Jones speaks of this humor as the reaction

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[1] In his "Conversations on some of the Old Poets," p. 98, Lowell speaks of this description of Blanch as, "one of the most beautiful portraits of a woman that was ever drawn."

of Chaucer's bourgeois spirit upon the impact of courtly ideals. In this poem we seem to see in his attitude toward the poetry of chivalry, a transition from faith to skepticism, somewhat similar to that of the Mediaeval lower classes who passed judgment upon the courtly code, in poems of the nature of Reynard the Fox. Just as this more reflective attitude led to a better narrative art on the part of Mediaeval writers, so we should expect it to do in the case of Chaucer. And, indeed, I think we can see in this poem a marked advance in characterization. The parliament idea lent itself admirably to the full play of his humor. Organizations were popular among Mediaeval lords and ladies. The cult of the daisy, the cult of the rose, etc.,all cults of love, with their elaborate codes of conduct and their "debats", afforded fit diversion for these aristocrats of "elegant leisure." It must have given Chaucer no little satisfaction to find so artistic a means of expression for his sly ridicule of courtly frivolity. This ridicule results, in the Parlement of Foules, in very realistic character sketches. The bourgeois characters which intrude into the parliament, make very telling contrasts with the gentle folk. We have, for instance, the duck with his colloquial and unrefined speech: "Wel bourded! by my hat!" and "There been more sterres, god wot, than a paire," (l: 588, 594) following in debate the courtly turtle dove. The crude and selfish "cukkow" "puttes him forth in the prese," interrupting the elegant love making of the "gentil tercelet" with:

"So I may have my make in pees,
I recche not how lange that ye stryve." (l: 604-5).

The clever introduction of the barn-yard chorus in lines 498-505,

as an off-set to the seriousness of the love debate, has often been commented upon. How characteristic of the sparrow-hawk type is his comment upon the stupid proposal of the goose. And what a target for sport it makes of the unsuspecting goose:

"Lo here! a parfit reson of a goos!
Quod the sperhawk; 'Never mot she thee!
Lo, swich hit is to have a tonge loos!
Now parde, fool, yet were hit bet for thee
Have holde thy pees, than shewed thy mycete!
Hit lyth not in his wit nor in his wille,
But sooth is seyd, "a fool can noght be stille."

(1: 568-573). There seem to be throughout the poem, sly thrusts at the English parliament. The following lines are an especially good burlesque on their ineffective methods:

"Now pees," quod Nature, "I comaunde here;
For I have herd al your opinion,
And in effect yet we be never the nere;"

(1: 618-621). The delightful and realistic humor of this poem, with its easy control of dialogue and art is clearly anticipatory of the gentle satire upon the human relations in the Canterbury tale of "Chanticleer," and shows the poet at a great remove from the stereotyped vision poem.

The Hous of Fame.

The Hous of Fame, insofar as it expresses Chaucer's personality and shows increasing freedom in the conduct of his art, is perhaps among the vision poems, his most valuable production. This poem, it seems to me, is a fair example of the reaction upon court-

ly ideals of the poet's individuality,--a reaction which might have been the experience of any Mediaeval genius, of Chrestien de Troyes, if he had once felt the gratification of speaking in his own person. How interesting and significant is the poet's attitude toward romance, as suggested in the episode of his visit to the Temple of Venus. In his earlier poems Chaucer had been, to a greater or less degree a servant of Venus. His lyrics, for instance, charming as they are, and showing some flashes of genius, yet represent his spirit in the trammels of courtly convention. In his impersonal attitude of amusement at courtly absurdities in the Parlement of Foules, I think we see the beginning of a sort of literary emancipation of Chaucer's genius which culminated, in the Hous of Fame, in his mastery over chivalric influences and his subjection of them to his literary purposes. He still went in the "daunce" when it was to his interest as a poet. We feel that Chaucer, in this poem has accommodated to his needs, the whole courtly fabric; that he is henceforth the individual artist.

The Hous of Fame shows Chaucer's increasingly dramatic method. This may be seen in the dialogue between Chaucer and the eagle,which gives a more sustained humor and interest than the preceding poems. Chaucer here, as in the "Legend" and the Canterbury Tales, adopts his favorite device of having a joke upon himself. He submits with humorous timidity to the erudite discourses of the eagle, with only an occasional demur, and with very brief responses to his condescending guide: "Yis!" "Nay!" "Gladly." "No, helpe me god, so wis!" Near the close of the unfinished vision, there is an interesting catalogue of folk, which seems to anticipate the Can-

terbury pilgrim motif, (1: 2120-2130) and, according to Professor Manley gives promise of the organization of the Canterbury Tales, ~~which I will now show.~~

The Legend of Good Women

In the Legend of Good Women are exemplified Chaucer's narrative qualities which evolved during his transitional period. But in it are also exemplified new narrative features, which make this last of the "Love Dreams" a clear anticipatory of the methods of the Canterbury Tales. Before mentioning the "new features," I wish to call attention to several points whose interest is related to the preceding observations. In the first place, Chaucer appears in the Prologue of the "Legend," in the role which he assumed in the Hous of Fame. There he was the humorous subject of the eagle's condescension; here, he is pleased to be chid by the god of love. His offense is his characteristic one against the interests of the "olde daunce." He stood demure and silent, while "Love" in eloquent rhetoric scolded him roundly. He held his tongue during the scolding, and when bidden to thank Alceste for her timely pleading in his behalf, he meekly "roos" and "sette him down upon his knees" before the Queen. Such sketches are in character with the "lewed" man among the Canterbury Pilgrims. Another feature which should be mentioned here is the description of the advance of Queen Alceste into the dreamer's presence. This seems to me the acme of Chaucer's early attempt at vivid dramatic setting, and also a worthy rival of later achievements in this line. Its artistic charm is the more remarkable when one remembers that the scene is portrayed in that

part of the Legend framework most calculated to be conventicnal. The A version of the Prologue shows the most graceful and dramatic arrangement. Queen Alceste is announced by a lark who sings "above":

"I see,"quod she, "the mighty god of love!
Lo! yond he cometh, I see his winges sprede!"

The dreamer then,

".....gan loken endelong the mede,
And saw him come, and in his hand a quene,
Clothed in royal abite al of grene.
A fret of gold she hadde next hir heer,
And upon that a whyt coroun she weer
With many floures, and I shall not lye;
For al the world, right as the dayesye
I--coroned is with whyte leves lyte,
Swich were the floures of hir corcun whyte."

(1: 141-152). As the queen advances over the "mede," led by the God of Love, the dreamer is enraptured with her surpassing beauty and womanliness. Upon her nearer approach he observes nineteen other ladies coming slowly across the "mede," who when they recognized the Queen,

"Ful sodeinly they stinten alle at-ones,
And kneled adoun, as it were for the nones.
And after that they wenten in compas,
Daunsinge aboute this flour an esy pas,
And songen, as it were in carole-wyse,
This balade, which that I yow shal devyse.

(1: 197-202). The complete climax of the scene comes in the refrain of the balade sung by the adcring ladies.

"Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne." This beautiful scene illustrates well Chaucer's skill in creating atmosphere. No definite description of the background is given. But by delicate touches: "the grene mede," the song of the lark, "the softe grene grass," "the garlond of rose-leaves," "Queen Alceste as a 'daysie'," it is made to exhale the very breath of the May-tide.

We noted in the Hous of Fame Chaucer's independent artistic attitude toward Mediaevalism. I think we have in the Legend of Good Women further exemplification of that attitude. He may use more than a touch of romance in portraying the unsuccessful loves of "Cupides Saintes" but he uses it in an artistic, not a servile spirit. Dr. ~~Kittredge~~ Schofield[1] has shown Chaucer's skill in these stories, of dressing in Mediaeval garb, events not Mediaeval.

The story-group idea of the Legend of Good Women, anticipates, as we have said, the plan of the Canterbury Tales. But not only does it anticipate the narrative scheme of the Canterbury Tales. In the varied themes and narrative qualities of its legends, it gives also a foretaste of the wide diversity of style and interest of the greater group. Thus, in the "Legend," we meet with the most remarkable of Chaucer's dramatic talents,--his ability to make his literary appeal equally through a variety of human emotions and concerning the most divergent human interest. In order to show this flexibility of his genius, I speak at some length of two of the stories, namely, The Legend of Thisbe, and The Legend of Hypermnestra.

[1] "The Sea-Battle in Chaucer's Legend of Cleopatra." In Kittredge Anniversary Papers.

In the Legend of Thisbe we have a story of excellent art, whose appeal is made by means of a most tender but irresistible pathos. It is told in the mood of the later "Pricress' Tale." We follow helplessly the sufferings of the innocent young lovers, Piramus and Thisbe, with the same indefinable welling in our hearts with which we witness the martyrdom of the "litel clergeon," or with which we hear the exiled Constance, "kneeling" with her litel child" "weeping in her arms," "pitously" to him "seye": "Pees, litel sone, I wol do thee non harm." Chaucer wisely portrays the lovers as youthful, for it is their naivetē which wins our sympathy at the outstart. As

"Upon that o syde of the wal stood he,
And on that other syde stood Tisbe,"

We share their anger at the "wicked wal" that will not "cleve, or fallen al a-two" to let them "mete." Having been won by their innocence at the outstart, the lioness episode, and the deaths of the lovers do not impress us as melodramatic, but serve rather to intensify the tender pathos of the tale. The opportunities for burlesque that the story offers, Shakespeare has made plain. What Chaucer has done for us here,as often in the Canterbury Tales, is to recommend to us a tale of violence and wonder on the score of human pathos and suffering; to retell the unusual, so to speak, in terms of universally familiar human experience. The manner of the story is so impelling, that we, with the author, forget ourselves until it is finished. Reflection shows that the success is attained by a simplicity in the telling, by a singleness of effect, and by an atmosphere that most skilfully but unobtrusively intensifies

the theme. Let us notice, for instance, the following suggestive details:

"And neer he com, and fond the wimple torn....."

"And kiste hit ofte, and weep on hit ful sore,
And seide, 'wimpel, allas! thee nis no more
But thou shalt fele as wel the blood of me
As thou hast felt the bleding of Tisbe!"

And Thisbe,

"How kisseth she his frosty mouth so colde."

In the Legend of Hypermnestra, we have a tragic atmosphere that approaches the theatrical. It is true that the story of Thisbe ended tragically and was vividly portrayed, but the atmosphere was different. The emotion upon which it played was of the nature of the pity that "renneth sone in gentil herte." While in the story of Hypermnestra, darker feelings are stirred: dislike and distrust of the wicked brothers who have arranged a marriage between their own children; a foreboding of the decrees of "Destinee;" sympathy with Lino and Hypermnestra; outrage at the treacherous design of Egisthe against the life of Lino; anxious speculation regarding the course which the daughter shall pursue concerning her father's commands; and final relief upon her humane decision, while we lament her martyrdom. From this list of the successive emotions excited by the legend, it can be seen that the story has a true dramatic structure. Had we time, it would be most interesting to study its dramatic structure. At this time we can but indicate its realistic dialouge and certain stage effects: As her father explained to her the dastardly act he had planned for her to do,

"This Ypermistra caste her eyen down,
And quook as dooth the leef of aspe grene;
Deed wex her hewe, and lyk as ash to sene,
And seyde, 'lord and fader, al your wille,
After my might, god wot, I shall fulfille,
So hit to me be no confusion.'" (l: 2647-2552)

"And out he caught a knyf, as rasour kene;" (l: 2654)

At evening, the "bryd,"

"To chambre is broght with revel and with songe." (l:2674)

(Notice the tragis contrast which reference to the bridal festivity affords.)

then,

"The night is wasted, and he fell a-slepe;" (l: 2677)

When the evil hour arrives we have a soliloquy from Hypermnestra which seems a Shakespearean fore-token:

"She rist her up, and stakereth heer and there,
And on her handes faste loketh she.
'Allas! and shul my handes blody be?
I am a maid, and, as by my nature,
And by my semblent and by my vesture,
Myn handes been not shapen for a knyf,
As for to reve no man fro his lyf.
What devil have I with the knyf to do?
And shal I have my throte corve a-two?
Then shal I blede, allas! and me be-shende:
And nedes cost this thing mot have an ende;
Or he or I mot needes lese our lyf.'" (l: 2687-2699)

Her decision is a notewrothy bit of characterization. It is very significant of Chaucer's individual treatment that his Hypermnestra, a legend heroine, should choose any other course than that which was laid out for her by her father. It is of interest to note here that Chaucer in these legends is telling very faithfully[1] old classical stories. The success which he achieves in realistic effect is therefore, the more remarkable. If we contrast with these stories, the graphic description of the Sea-fight in the Legend of Cleopatra, (1: 633-652), the lively hunting scene in the Legend of Dido, beginning with its: "hey! go bet! prik thou! lat goon, lat goon!" (1: 289) and ending as hunting parties often do, with a storm, the thunder roaring "with a grisly steven," while the rain, hail and sleet came down with "hevenes fyr;" the passionate "compleynt" of Ariadne, as with "colde herte" "hye upon a rokke" while "shyned the mone, she watched her faithless lover sail out to sea; all the while bearing in mind the whimsical humor: ("And trusteth as in love no man but me"--L. of P. 1: 167), with which Chaucer here and there tones down the sericusness of his stories, we have, in the Legend of Good Women a fair preliminary survey of the diversified style of the Canterbury Tales.

In the preceding pages we have pointed out, in the evolution of Chaucer's narrative powers, early examples which show dramatic skill: realistic dialogue; a feeling for dramatic situation; a working of, and skill in, realistic characterization; well-balanced narrative structure with a lively sense for effective dramatic

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[1] Prof. Skeat notes the omission by Chaucer, in the story of Thisbe, of the mulberry-tree, whose color was changed from white to black by the blood of Piramus. "The story gains in pathos, says Prof. Skeat, "by the omission."

setting as seen particularly in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women; and finally a control of many styles in the individual legends of the group. We have seen Chaucer's use of romance, not as an end in itself, but as a literary asset. And finally, we have watched the developing of his charming humor, which, as the most distinctive mark of his personality, is, therefore, the soul of his narrative art. Consequently, it is very significant of the important relation between Chaucer's transitional poetry and his later work, that the sly satire upon men, women, and events, and the marriage relation in particular, begun in the Parlement of Foules, continued in the Nonne Preestes Tale; that the role of the shy poet assumed in his early fiction is played again on the road to Canterbury, along which Chaucer rides, keenly observant of his surroundings, but with eyes cast modestly upon the ground as though he were "looking for a hare."

CHAPTER V

TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

Troilus and Criseyde follows the Minor Poems in the evolution of Chaucer's genius, yielding the palm for superior artistic structure to the Canterbury Tales. But, although it contains narrative defects incident to its length and subject matter, yet on the score of its admirable characterization, its sustained dramatic powers, and as being concentrative of all Chaucer's literary qualities, it is surely his masterpiece.

Troilus and Criseyde has often been spoken of as the first modern psychological novel and as such we may consider it in this paper. But we cannot determine its art by modern standards. There seems to me to be but one reasonable vantage ground from which to study its narrative methods. Chaucer is here telling a story of human experience localized by a Mediaeval setting. As having a theme of eternal interest, Troilus and Criseyde might be held up to the light of modern judgment, but, inasmuch as that theme is accommodated to a social system totally unlike that of the present, it seems unbelievable that one would criticize the story without due regard for the effect upon its art of the environment in which it is cast.[1] For the same reason that Shakespeare's plays are

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[1] Mr. Root, it seems to me in his "Poetry of Chaucer," has failed to take into account fully enough, the atmosphere of the story. He avows that his point of view is also that of Mr. Albert S. Cook.

staged in Shakespearean costume, Troilus and Criseyde, it seems to me, must be studied against its Mediaeval backgroung. Lady Macbeth is very modern in her characteristics, yet we cannot conceive of her in any than her Shakespearean habit and environment. Is it any less reasonable to take Criseyde out of her world and judge her by modern ethics? Considered under Chaucer's guidance and in the light of attenuating circumstances, Chaucer's great heroine appears very different from the scheming woman that some have found her. Thomas Warton was the first of English critics to adopt the right attitude toward the literature of the past: "In reading the works of a poet who lived in a remote age, it is necessary that we should look back upon the customs and manrers which prevailed in that age. We should endeavor to place ourselves in the writer's situation and circumstances. Hence we should become better enabled to discover how the turn of thinking, and manner of composing, were influenced by familiar appearances and established objects which are utterly different from those with which we are now surrounded."[1] This shall be my point of view in the following discussion of the narrative art of Troilus and Criseyde. In these few pages I cannot attempt to make a study of the plan of the poem. I can but hope to show by examples from it, the character of Chaucer's genius here, and its promises for the future.

Troilus and Criseyde, if we may for a moment disregard its dramatic construction is a thorough-going romance. If we would follow Thomas Warton's suggestion, we should, then, before commentupon it, recreate the Mediaeval back ground against which its scenes were enacted. This has been done at some length in an earlier

[1] "Observations Upon Spenser." Vol. II., P. 71.

chapter. It will be necessary here simply to emphasize the main features which will recall for the sympathetic reader the atmosphere of chivalry. The love relation, it will be remembered, was the all-absorbing interest of the lords and ladies of romance, and consequently, of the poets of romance. Judged by our standards this relation was illicit. With them, as we have seen, it was held sacred, and hedged about by a most elaborate code of rules. A woman's honor rested upon the ability of her "ami" to hold profoundly secret, her love for him. The great offence was the revelation of the relation. The following speech of Pandarus to Troilus emphasizes this necessity for secrecy, and shows clearly, that Chaucer has adopted the courtly economy as the setting of his story:

"Wher-fore er I wol ferther goon a pas,
Yet eft I thee biseche and fully seye,
That privatee go with us in this cas,
That is to seye, that thou us never wreve:
And be nought wrooth, though I thee ofte preye
To holden secree swich an heigh matere;
For skilful is, thou wost wel my preyere.

And thenk what wo ther hath bitid er this,
For makinge of avauntes as men rede;
And what mischaunce in this world yet ther is,
Fro day to day right for that wikked dede
For which these wyse clerkes that ben dede
Han ever yet proverbed to us yonge,
That "firste vertu is to kepe tonge." (1: 281-293)

This strict secrecy imposed upon lovers the most guarded bearing when mingling with their fellows. It will be recalled in the story of Sir Launfal, told by Marie de France, that one momentary burst of anger which surprised from him the secret of his lady's favor, well nigh lost him her love. It seems to me strange that Troilus, under compunctions of secrecy no less binding, should be criticized for his silence in the council which decreed the exchange of Criseyde for Antenor. It must be borne in mind that his silence was a matter of his lady's honor. Criseyde, also, in deceiving Diomede about her Trojan love, was but acting in accordance with courtly conventions. This life of restrained impulses, of elaborate prescriptions for "Courtesie" and "gentilesse," leading to superficialities, to conventionalities and in its extremes, to hypocrisy, gave rise to a very elaborate kind of literature.[1] We would expect, at best, then, from any romance poet treating the Troilus and Criseyde theme, a web of beautiful artificialities. In the hands of Chaucer, however, the story has become something greater.

What he has accomplished is the result of his insight into human character. We have seen, while tracing the Minor Poems, Chaucer's literary regard for romance. Sometimes its beauty appealed to him, as in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women; sometimes its humorous absurdities, in the Parlement of Foules, especially. In Troilus and Criseyde I believe Chaucer is depicting the tragedy which was possible in the artificial society which found its literary expression in Mediaeval romance. I think he is showing that real sufferings were concealed beneath the veil of Mediae-

val artificialities. He therefore, works strictly within the limitations set by the courtly code. Not only does he give his story a chivalric setting, but he invests his lovers, especially Troilus, with a deep regard for chivalric conventions. Troilus' whole character, in fact, is of a Mediaeval cast. His rhetorical speeches, his sentimentality, his knightly "secree" would qualify him for any love court. Criseyde, no less than Troilus, conforms to the social conditions among which she moves. So far, Chaucer, in his method of procedure is at one with Chrestien de Troyes. But in their respective narrative treatments Chaucer and the romance poet reach the parting of the ways. Chrestien de Troyes dealing with the Troilus and Criseyde theme would have given us a beautiful romance, whose lovers, happy automatons, submissive to the requirements of the social fabric which hedged them about, would have lived out a blissful existence. Chaucer, on the other hand, taking the same theme has leavened it with his personality. His lovers are not the stereotyped lovers of romance. They have feelings. Troilus loves deeply and truly. Criseyde, a real woman, loves and pities and fears. Moreover their lives are subject to the same vicissitudes that visit common mortals. We have in Troilus and Criseyde, then, romantic realism. This is significant of the form of Chaucer's story. Realism was not a harmonius element in the romance of chivalry. And so it proved in the lives of Troilus and Criseyde. When "Destinee" brought to them her portended trouble, their human emotions come into conflict with the romantic decorum by which they were governed. The alternative presented itself: happiness at the expense of honor, or "honor sauved" at the expense of love. No "Märchen" marvels

happened to solve the problem. No strange visitant came to help the lovers out of their difficulty. As real people in a world of reality, they must work out their own fate. Troilus as a sincere lover proposed defiance of conventions. But whereas, Criseyde, a woman shrinking from gossip, afraid of those "wikked tonges," the "ferfulleste wight that ever lived," refused to follow his plan, we have a tragedy. Chaucer himself called his story a tragedy: "Go, litel book, go litel myn tregedie" (1: 1786). But, since the nature of this paper demands that we use narrative terms in their more limited meanings, we must regard Troilus and Creseida as a dramatic novel, rather than a drama.

As such it is a remarkable accomplishment. We have repeatedly referred to the diffuse propensities of romance literature. When in addition to this, we consider what Chaucer had to contend against in the matter of source limitation, we can the better appreciate what he has here done. Chaucer was a scholar, and as such was familiar with a wide range of materials. One might be led to say of him as Ten Brink has said of Boccaccio, that he "found his story ready to his hand." For he did find the story cleverly worked out by Boccaccio from the versions of Benoit de Sainte - More and Guido delle Colonne. But scholars, comparing Boccaccio's Filostrato with Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde have found the latter a new creation. I would not give the impression that his fancy carried him far from the original. It is characteristic of Chaucer that he followed the main lines of his sources very closely. And indeed that his artistic successes are thereby the greater, it has been partially the object of this paper to show. But while following the Boccaccio story in the main, Chaucer has adapted its char-

acters and the manner of telling it, to his plan. Boccaccio's Filostrato was itself a work of art. Originally an episode in the Troy story of Benoit, Boccaccio, in a creative spirit, by artistic touches and realistic characterization made it a most admirable story. Boccaccio as a sentimentalist directs our attention mainly to the love lorn Troilo. Griseida is charming but false. Pandarus is a gay gallant. In Chaucer's hands, the story takes on a quite different tone. For reasons explained above, it is invested with a decidedly conventional atmosphere. It's main interest is psychological centering about the character of Criseyde. Chaucer's heroine is like Griseida, charming, but in contrast to her, thoughtful and conservative. Troilus is noble and courtly, a fit lover for Criseyde. A great change is made in the character of Pandarus. From the gay courtier, he becomes the intriguing bachelor uncle, genial and comic. Boccaccio's story is less than seven thousand lines in lenghth, while Troilus and Criseyde contains over eight thousand lines. This greater lenghth of Chaucer's story is significant of his purpose. Whereas Boccaccio tells his story for the love interest, Chaucer is concerned rather with a minute analysis of Criseyde's character and, therefore requires more time. The relative objects of the two narrators is further seen in the placing of the climax.[1] In Boccaccio, the first part of the story is told in 2288 lines, the second in 3224; in Chaucer the first part contains 4543 lines and the second 3514. This shows that Boccaccio's sympathy was chiefly with Troilus in his love sorrow while Chaucer dwelt longer with the unfolding of his heroine's character. He was plainly no sentimentalist but a psychologist. Chaucer, then, in

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[1] "Troilus and Criseyde." M.L.R. Vol. II., p. 307. Thomas R. Rice.

Troilus and Criseyde has charged a highly sentimental Italian story with chivalry, adapted it to his psychological mood, and given us a very realistic modern drama of life. But this surprising modernity of Troilus and Criseyde must not betray us into forgetting, as we pass on to its more detailed study, its remoter background. We must remember that this is another case of "new wine in old bottles." Since in preceding discussions,-"Short Story Art" and "Mediaeval Narrative Art,"--we studied principles of structure with reference to their bearing upon plot, character, and setting, it will be well to observe the same method of procedure here, giving chief consideration to characterization as the motive force of the story.

So preeminently is the story of Troilus and Criseyde a character story, that it is hard to consider plot apart from characterization. Chaucer seems to have so loved his ideal heroine that forgetting everything but her portrayal, he has, contrary to his characteristic brevity, allowed a long story to grow up around her. And indeed, so carefully has he delineated her character, that we have from Chaucer, the Short Story Teller, a tale over eight thousand lines in length. Yet despite its length, this tale has a plot of marked unity and dramatic proportions. Chaucer's very singleness of interest in his heroine, secures coherence. Aristotle's test for epic unity was the outlining of the story. I think it can be applied very satisfactorily to Troilus and Criseyde: Calkas deserts Rome for Greece. His daughter, Criseyde, burning with the shame of it, successfully prays mercy from Hector. At a feast Troilus sees and falls in love with her. Pandarus, his friend, becomes his love

advocate. At first Criseyde relents but slightly. Pandarus bids Troilus write a love message to his lady. This painfully accomplished, Pandarus delivers it,and Criseyde is urged to answer. In a long soliloquy she weighs the question of granting Troilus her love, decides favorably and descends to relieve her mind in "pleye" with her maidens. By means of a clever intrigue Pandarus brings the lovers together at the home of Deiphebus, and, later at his own home where they plight their troth. Then occurs the council which decrees the exchange of Criseyde for Autenor,a hostage among the Greeks. Criseyde separated from Troilus gradually yields to the persuasions of Diomede, while Troilus watches the city gates in vain for her return. From this rough sketch, we see that all the episodes of the story have contributed to its central theme. That Chaucer knew well what he was about. It is only the unsympathetic reader who is impatient of his deliberateness here. For not only is this deliberateness consistent with the courtly atmosphere of the story, but it is by this means that Chaucer accomplishes his main object. While giving time for Criseyde as a "daungereuse" lady to be hardly won, it also affords opportunity for very minute characterization, there is little action to enliven the plot. It is primarily psychological. Chaucer has, therefore, set himself a hard task, but the skill with which he accomplishes it is worthy a Henry James.

This success is due to the dramatic arrangement of the story as well as to its dramatic portrayal. Through the first, second, and the greater part of the third book, we wait for Criseyde to yield her love. Then, there is the happy climax when "This Troilus" is with "bliss surprised." Through the fourth and fifth books we

sadly follow Criseyde in her pitiful "ferfulness," as she falls a prey to Diomede's persuasions. It is clear that Chaucer's story follows the regular classical formula for dramatic composition.

In the following scenes, Chaucer's powers of graphic portrayal are well illustrated. They seem written for the stage. Their scenic touches,--the effect of Criseyde's black dress, for instance, against the gaily bedight holiday crowd in Book I., their realistic dialogue, their stage directions such as this for instance, in Book II. (l: 214-218): while Pandarus was tormenting Criseyde about the "aventure" which he had to tell her. She says:

"Nay sitteth down" etc.....
"And every wight that was about hem tho,
That herde that, gave fer a-wey to stonde,
Whyl they two hadde al that hem liste in honde."

help us to visualize clearly the action. There are humorous scenes as, for instnace, that in which Pandarus directs Troilus, erstwhile Cupid's scorner, as he assiduously assays his first love letter. Pandarus' advice is wise and to the point:

"Beblotte it with thy teres eek a lyte:" he says,
"And if thou write a goodly word al softe,
Though it be good, reherce it not too ofte." (l: 1027-30)

Troilus is fearful and hesitant, but after impatient insistence of Pandarus, he brings it to completion. As he puts on the finishing touches, we are tempted to laugh at him with Mr. Root,and call him the "Great big boy:"

"And with his salte teres gan he bathe
The ruby in his signet and it sette

Upon the wex deliverliche and rathe;
Ther-with a thousand tymes, er he lette,
He kiste tho the lettre that he shette,
And seyde,'lettre, a blisful destene
Thee shapen is, my lady shall thee see.'" (1: 1086-1093)

Another humorous scene shows Pandarus off to the best advantage. After the dinner pary at the home of Deiphebus, he cleverly clears Troilus room of all visitants, because too much "presse" is not good for the sick, and then tiptoeing along, leading Criseyde by the sleeve, "Com neer and gan in at the curtain pyke," saying solitiously, "God do us bote on alle syke!" When he saw his little scheme working so beautifully, he was so touched, the hypocrit, that he;

. . . . . ."Weep as he to water wolde,
And poked over his nece newe and newe,
And seyde,'Wo bigon ben hertes trewe!
For love of god, make of this thing an-ende,
Or slay us both at ones er that ye wende." (1: 1115-1120)

This scene, by the way, following a beautiful love declaration of Troilus, illustrates Chaucer's habit of off-setting the serious by the comic.

A most graphic scene, showing the good will existing between Criseyde and Pandarus, bringing out Criseyde's powers of easy hospitality and pleasantry, and also the proverbial curiosity of woman's nature as seen in Criseyde, is the first occasion of Pandarus' love plea on behalf of Troilus. He finds his niece among a company of her ladies reading the "Sege of Troye." Criseyde, when she spied him, in playful mood:--

....."roos, and by the hond in hye,

She took him faste, and seyde, 'this night thrye,

To goode mote it turne, of you I mette!'

And with that word she down on bench him sette."

Pandarus then attempts a little hoaxing in regard to the nature of the book she is reading. "Perhaps it is a love story?" But he is checkmated with

"Uncle,.....your maistresse is not here!"

(Pandarus was an unsuccessful lover, as all knew.) Before long Pandarus is out with the first hint of his business: "As ever thryve I, ...Yet coude I telle a thing to don you pleye," and she "Now uncle dere,.....tel it us for goddes love." But he refuses, and then the game begins. On Pandarus part it is the effort to work up skilfully to the mention of Troilus. On Criseyde's part it is the concealing of her curiosity,--"For never sith the tyme that she was born,

To knowe a thing desired she so faste."----

hoping that she may surprise his secret from him. Criseyde, therefore, assumes an indifferent attitude, "Now, uncle myn, I nil yow nought displese,

Nor axen more, that may do yow disese," and turns the conversation into different channels. In a spirit of true "gentilesse," she inquires after her benefactor, Hector, how he has fared since the battle.

"Ful wel, I thanke it god, quod Pandarus,

Save in his arm he hath a litel wounde;

And <u>eek</u> his <u>fresshe</u> <u>brother</u> <u>Troilus</u>,".....

Seizing this opportunity, Pandarus praises Troilus, then feigns to take his leave. But Criseyde finds some inconsequential talk to detain him. He rises again, casually remarking that she might not have refused to dance with him if she but knew what "so fair aventure is betid." Criseyde can stand it no longer. She begs for the secret while he demurs on the ground that she may not want to know after all. She assures him that he may "Say to her" "what he liste":

"With that she gan her eyen doun to caste,
And Pandarus to coghe gan a lyte,"

and the story <u>almost</u> begins. Pandarus must needs compliment her upon her beauty, make some vague remarks about a great "aventure" that is in store for her if she will but take it, before he says, at last,

"The noble Troilus so loveth thee,
That bot ye helpe, it wol his bane be."

The scene showing Criseyde among her maidens in the garden, and the Trojan gossip scene I shall discuss later in connection with Criseyde's character. The many other interesting scenes must be passed by.

Before closing this section, however, we should notice Chaucer's effective use of by-play. In the dinner party episode at the house of Deiphebus, for instance, while Pandarus is leading Criseyde into the foreground, Deiphebus and Eleyne are seen leaving the stage in earnest conversation over a letter. Again, in the climactic scene of the story, while the two lovers are lost to the world in their bliss, "quod" Pandarus, moving slyly toward the chimney,

"For ought I can espyen,
This light nor I ne werven here of nought;
Light is not good for syke folkes yën." (1: 1134-1137)

Complete as are the episodes of this poem it must be said finally, that each one is a link in the story and does not exist for a mere artistic purpose of its own. Each one either carries forward the interest of the story, or brings into greater relief the character of Criseyde.

The character of Criseyde, then, is the glory of the poem. Critics are so at odds as to her nature that we may listen to Criseyde herself, as she gives her own characterization. Given to introspection she was thoroughly acquainted with herself. She knew her virtues and her weaknesses and admitted all with a rare candor:

"To late is now to speke of this matere;
Prudence, allas! oon of thyn eyen three
Me lakked alwey, er that I came here;
On tyme y-passed wel-remembred me;
And present tyme eek coude I wel y-see.
But futur tyme, er I was in the snare,
Coude I not seen; that causeth now my care."

Should we not take into account then, this fatal fearfulness of the future when judging her character? Her conduct throughout the story proves that she is correct in what she says about having the first two eyes of prudence. For her conduct is ever "wel-avysed." She walks among her fellows with firm tread, well poised, "With ful assured lokinge and mannere." She knows well what she is about. Nothing which concerns her present actions ever surprises her out

of her wonted dignity and readiness. If Pandarus thought to win his cause by sinuous methods or by any violent storm upon her affections, he was mistaken. Criseyde was sad when made to believe that her will held two lives in "jupartye." She was even willing to "constreyne her heart ayeins her lust" to love Troilus. But she would grant no favor against her will: But that I nil not holden him in honde, Ne love a man, ne can I not, ne may Ayeins my wil;" (II. 1: 479-481). That her final love of Troilus was sincere, both her own words and Chaucer's prove: "And eek bycause I felt wel and say

Your grete trouthe, and servyse every day;
And that your herte al myn was sooth to seyne,
This droof me for to rewe up-on your peyne."

Her great pity for Troilus suffering brings this confession from Criseyde's lips. (III. 1: 991-996). Chaucer cannot bear that "envious jangle" should regard Criseyde's feeling for Troilus as a light love. He states emphatically:

"For I seye nought that she so soddeynly
Yaf him hir love, but that she gan enclyne
To lyke him first."

One characteristic feature of Criseyde's"a-vysed"manner was a regard for her honor. "My honor save" is a phrase continually upon her lips. In the constant and sincere recurrence of this note in the speech of Criseyde we see Chaucer's power of bringing out the bitter irony of a situation. In Criseyde's careful consideration of the nature of Troilus' love for her,we have an admirable illustration of her habit of weighing matters before making a decision. Troilus is a king's son and she of lesser rank, therefore, as a woman of

virtue she must needs find the cause of his great affection. Considering her own personal charms she finds them worthy of his love. With what delightful frankness, she draws this sketch of herself:

"I am oon of the fayreste, out of drede,
And goodlieste, who-so taketh heed;
And so men seyn in al the toun of Troye."

and reaches the conclusion,

"What wonder is it though he of me have joye?" (II. 1: 743-750). So much for the first two "eyes of prudence." And the third? "oon of thyn eyen three me lakked alwey." Lack of this eye, as Criseyde herself says closed her outlook upon the future. Contemplation of the future bewildered her senses. The meditations of her secret closet gave her no solace. Her path lay clear before her until she came to the confines of the present. Into the future she could see no definite trail to follow. All that she could discern there was the shadowy form of fate at which "hir herte quaketh". The garden scene in Book II. shows her well in her character of the "ferfulleste wight." Immediately following her long soliloquy which shows her character in all its strength, this scene is especially effective. Having reached the conclusion that she loves Troilus and will grant him her love, her mind is clearer and she descends to the garden to seek diversion among her maidens. But even as she descends the stairs, thoughts of the future creep into her mind. And for want of that third eye of Prudence which might reveal the right course, "Som cloud com over the sonne."

The scene which follows is one of Chaucer's most artistic strokes. It affords a dramatic contrast for those who have seen

her in her"closet al aloon." Antigone, the shene sings an impassioned song of young love, the "blosmy bowes sway along th shaded rayled alleyes,"her maidens dance about her"; but all this exuberance of life palls the wearied senses of Criseyde. She is glad when "whyte thinges wexen dimme and donne," and she can take her rest. Yet even in her sleep this "newe love" troubles her. Lulled to sleep by the nightingale, advocate of love, she dreams that an eagle "fethered whyt as boon," with his "longe clawes hir herte rente."

Passing over the brief space of bliss of this "wommanliche wyf," we see her at last face ~~the~~ th face with a situation she so much dreaded. It has been decided that she is to leave Troy and her name is on the tongues of gossips. How realistically Chaucer sketches the little scene of their consolatory visit to Criseyde. We can see them drawing their chairs closer and bringing the conversation skilfully to the main point at issue. The admirable art is all for the purpose, however, of helping us to sympathize more fully with the lonely Criseyde. At the breaking point, harrassed by their news, Criseyde "wepte" while thilke foles sittinge hir aboute," imagined that they were giving her comfort. When they have gone,after their "nyce vanitee" Criseyde gives herself up to grief at her misfortune. When the question of her departure came to a final issue, she quailed before the manly proposal of Troilus that they defy conventions and escape together. For want of that third eye she chose the alternative which seemed to present the best <u>immediate</u> course. Having started on that course which grew ever more bewildering, her courage forsook her. Having no one to whom she "dorste pleyne," is it strange that she surrendered to Diomede? One speech of hers

seems to me to give the true index of her heart and mind:

"To Diomede algate I wol be trewe,"

Having found footing again in the love of Diomede she will stand firm. She appears to me a virtuous woman whose weakness was due to one flaw in her character. As a real woman obeying unnatural conventions, that flaw could not but come to light.

In the character of Troilus we see a closer following of chivalric conventions than in Criseyde. And because of this, it seems to me, he is a most artistic asset of the story. If Chaucer had made him less a knight of "courtesie," the tale would have lost much of its tragic irony. Criseyde's parting commande to him to "save her honor" would have had less meaning. The frequent courtly rhetoric of Troilus, then, and his somewhat elaborate love making are in perfect keeping with his character and with Chaucer's design.

In the character of Pandarus, we have one of Chaucer's most admirable achievements. He is a modification of the conventional "go-between." And in his modified character how different is he from the Pandarus of Boccaccio. Chaucer has placed upon his shoulders a great burden of responsibility for the conduct of the play. He is the friend and love advocate of Troilus; uncle and confidante of Criseyde; match-maker and love intriguer, and the source of most of the humor of the play. But he is not a mere Jack-of-all trades. He has an interesting personality that heightens the dignity of role in the play. His serious side is seen, especially in his anxiety over his nieces' "honor," and in his great friend-ship for Troilus. The sincerity of his action throughout the story comes out in his speech to Troilus when they have both fully realized the faithlessness of Criseyde. It is too long to quote here, but the substance

of it may be seen in these words: "If I dide ought that mighte lyken thee, it is me leef."....."I can no-more seye." (Vol. V. 1: 1725-1744).

The setting of Troilus and Criseyde is more properly an atmosphere. Its background is of course the city of Troy, and as we read, our fancy fills in the environment that Chaucer suggests. For Chaucer does no more than suggest a setting:

"Shet was every window of the place," "blosmy bowes." The atmosphere of Troilus and Criseyde is, however one of its most important and artistic features. "Destinee" stalks ever in the background. It has almost a personal part in the action. As in Hawthorne's stories and again in Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale, especially, it seems to subject the actors to its influence. Criseyde struggled against it from the beginning to the end of her troubled life:

"Alas! quod she, out of this region
I, woful wrecche and infortuned wight
And born in corsed constellacion,
Mot goon, and thus departen fro my knight;" (I: 744-747).

IV.

Troilus felt it:

"For al that comth, comth by necessitee;
Thus to be lorn it is my destinee." (IV. 1: 958-959).

Even Pandarus acknowledged himself checkmated in his gentle love intrigues, by a power that he could not understand:

"....But in his heart he thoughte, and softely lough
And to himself ful sobrely he seyde:
'Fro hazel-wode, ther Joly Robin pleyde,

Shal com al that thou abydest here;

Ye, fare-wel al the snow of ferne yere!" (V. 1: 1173-1176)

Finally Chaucer himself joins the chorus of those crying out against the bitter vicissitudes of life:

"But Troilus, thou mayst now est or west,

Pype in an ivy leef, if that thee lest;

Thus gooth the world; god shilde us fro mischaunce,

And every wight that meneth trouthe avaunce!" (V. 1: 1431-1435).

In concluding this chapter, we may say that Troilus and Cruseyde, although lacking in the narrative polish of the later Canterbury Tales, is Chaucer's most remarkable accomplishment. All the qualities of his talent are displayed in this story, but its dramatic characterization is its most admirable feature. Not again in his own works, and by no other author before Shakespeare was Chaucer rivalled in this respect. Finally, as a tragedy of romantic realism, Troilus and Criseyde shows Chaucer's artistic discernment and marks him as undeniably a modern poet.

CHAPTER VI

THE CANTERBURY TALES

Opening the covers of the Canterbury Tales is like opening the door of an artist's studio, for in this collection we see the wide range of Chaucer's talent. We are not surprised at the diversity we find there. It has been foreshadowed in the comedy of the Parlement of Foules, in the pathos of the Legend of Thisbe, in the tragedy of Ypermnestra, in the admirable combination of all these elements in Troilus and Criseyde. Neither are we surprised at the familiarity of the subjects of the tales, for we know well Chaucer's habit of ransacking the past for his themes. The Canterbury Tales, then, have nothing new to offer to one studying the development of Chaucer's genius. But they have something better in the way of a more artistic narrative art. From them we can see more clearly the strokes which made Chaucer's works, diversified as they are, Chaucerian.

The explanation of this more perfect art of the Canterbury Tales is due to the fuller development of Chaucer's personality. In an earlier Chapter we reviewed briefly the history of his time. We observed the increasing power of the people in governmental affairs. We saw in the Peasants' Revolt the discontent of the masses. Chaucer as comptroller, heard daily, we found, these stirrings toward personal expression, and fortunately for literature, he reacted to them heartily. But it was no less fortunate that his artist

nature conquered whatever active bourgeois leanings he may have had, and rendered him impartial toward reform and social orders. It was further fortunate that Chaucer had his literary and individualistic tendencies strengthened by contact with Italian Renaissance literature. When he took up the Canterbury Tales, he was prepared, therefore, to draw with the pen of an artist, the most realistic portraits from his own experience. We can make the clearer here, then, another remove from the more conventional interests of his earlier years and, consequently, another step nearer to modern methods.

It must not be inferred from the preceding remarks, that Chaucer, in becoming a more pronounced modernist, forsook his Mediaeval interests. He was to the last like Shakespeare, a borrower of plots. More than that,his work showed to the last characteristic details of Mediaeval styles. So that we recur again to the necessity of studying Chaucer's narrative with reference to his Mediaeval models. In a preceding chapter on Mediaeval narrative art, we observed in the matter of conciseness and proportion, a marked superiority of the shorter legends over the longer romances. In the fabliaux, too, an increase of personality was plainly reflected, resulting in a real dramatic story type. Chaucer, in his vision poems, and in Troilus and Criseyde, followed the earlier, more elaborate courtly literature, while in the Canterbury Tales he significantly enough, was more influenced by the briefer narrative models: Märchen, legends, lais and fabliaux. I think it not inadvisable, then, to study the narrative art of the Canterbury Tales according to these Mediaeval groupings. I think, moreover, that the order named may be preserved in this discussion, marking out as it does a rough progress toward the narrative of art. These types, it will be re-

called, have given more or less clear expression to the ideas of social groups. It will be interesting to observe the reaction upon them of Chaucer's individuality, which may be traced in part to his bourgeois origin, and in part of his experiences at court.

The story-group plan is not only not original in the Canterbury Tales, but this is not its first appearance in Chaucer. As we have seen, it is fairly well worked out in the Legend of Good Women, while the pilgrim motif, it has been suggested, is foreshadowed by the array of folk mentioned in the Hous of Fame (1: 1030-40). The story frame ~~inda~~ was a favorite one with Mediaeval composers,[1] Chaucer's plan corresponding in a general way to that of the Decameron and the Seven Wise Masters. The fact has been pointed out[2] that even the pilgrim idea had been worked before. So that no credit is due Chaucer for his scheme. We are to honor him therefore for the way in which he handled his theme--for his manner, not for his subject.

In order to give point to what has already been said, concerning Chaucer's literary point of view, I think nothing will be more apposite than a general comparison of the respective methods of Chaucer and Langland in dealing with the Mediaeval folk of their compositions. In Piers Plowman we discover a field full of folk:

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[1](a) This is the plan of a collection of fifteen tales of the fourteenth century under the title of, "Proces of the Seven Sages."

(b) The Decameron of Boccaccio is the most famous group of stories, though Chaucer was probably not acquainted with it.

[2]Karl Young in "**The Plan of the Canterbury Tales**" in Kittredge Anniversary Papers, points to the Novelle of Sercambi as a parallel of the pilgrim motif.

"knights, clerks and commons, jurymen and summoners, sherriffs and sheriffs' men, beadles and bailiffs, Middlemen, brokers, victuallers, pleaders; no reckoning the rout that ran at Meeds heels." Langland's people are listed in groups. Members of the same class have common characteristics. With a few exceptions, (some of the Seven Deadly Sins are very realistic) no individual stands out from his fellows. This manner of description results from the nature of Langland's purpose. He was a reformer, earnestly interested in the masses. He had no time to notice the color of a pardoner's hair nor the "knobbes" that might be "sittinge" on a somnour's cheeks. But Chaucer <u>did</u>. He carefully selected individuals for his pilgrim band. He endowed each with the characteristic virtues or vices of his sect. But he also gave to each a mind and heart and human qualities, rendering him capable of the sympathy of the most modern readers. His knight, naturally most conventional of any of the pilgrims, is yet a common man, for he is capable of quaking for "ire" one moment, then impulsively giving way to "pitee" in the next. I think one would have no trouble in recognizing Chaucer's monk among a group of brothers, if not by his "eyen stepe," at least by his "curious pin," that "hadde a love-knotte in the gretter ende." If one were in doubt about the Wife of Bath he would but need to hear her "laughe and carpe" and display her "gat-tothe" to be sure of her identity among the other wives of her group. Not only are Chaucer's people clearly individualized, but they are idealized for the sake of art. One can tell a painting of Corot by its effect of early light, or of Turner by its brilliant coloring. The "beste" so characteristic of Chaucer, seems some such artistic mannerism. It enables us to

point to Chaucer's stories in a Mediaeval collection of literature and say, "Now this, or that, is Chaucer's". We could never mistake Langland for Chaucer. Both are realistic. But the realism of the one is,so to speak in the rough, while the realism of the other is finished with a touch of fantasy and the work therefore, enduring.

Before taking up a study of the individual tales of the Canterbury Collection, something must be said of Chaucer's management of his story frame-work. He shows a true dramatic sense by the manner in which he has bound the group together. This "laison" is accomplished in three ways: by the employment of the host as general manager of the venture; by the use of head links and end links; by cross-references.

Pilgrimages were common in fourteenth century England. It was customary also, in those days of out-lawry, for composite groups of all social orders to travel together. Chaucer's scheme, then, simply reproduces custom. His selection of the host as a sort of unifying element, is the Chaucerian stroke of the scheme. This was a happy idea. For in Chaucer's day, social barriers were still regid, and the close social union of the Canterbury Pilgrims was surely not likely to be a common occurrence. But at the tavern of "myn hoste," it was customary for all classes to meet and mingle. How natural that he should propose to his guests a holiday pilgrimage under his own supervision. And how in keeping with his character and position that he should arrange for a grand banquet upon the return. From this delightful plan, the group derives its general unity.

This unity is made more coherent by means of introductory

or closing remarks of the host, or by means of the prologues of the speakers. In the case of the Miller and the Reeve, a mutual antipathy prompted their tales. The stories of the Wife of Bath, the Clerke, the Marchant, the Squyer, and the Frankelyne, called "The Marriage Group," are bound together because of their common topic. Other tales are placed in contrast to each other for the sake of variety. The Nun's Priest's tale, for instance, following the encyclopedic contribution of the Monk, is most refreshing.

Still further interweaving the interests of the individual stories are the cross-references. In the "Marriage Group," for instance, this is especially noticeable, and gives piquancy to the theme. The Wife in her story made some very cutting remarks about clerks. Her experience with her "clerkly" husband, "Jankin," had taught her that it was proper for a woman to have sovereignty in marriage. The clerk then bided his time. In the nature of his tale, which honored a woman for her patience in love, he had a very dignified but pointed revenge. At its conclusion, he relates the story in a few sly words, to the Good Wife.

"For which heer, for the wives love of Bathe,
Whos lyf and al hir secte god mayntene
In heigh Mistrye."

This is an example of the many crossings of interest in the stories, which must be taken into account if one would appreciate them thoroughly.

In opening this discussion of Chaucer's modified romances and fabliaux, his Sir Thopas may be mentioned as indicative of his attitude toward chivalric literature. This poem is plainly a bur-

lesque upon the more tedious rhyming romances of the day. The description of the Knight, Sir Thopas, shows the spirit in which he is conceived:

"Sir Thopas wex a doughty swayn,
Whyt was his face as payndemayn,
His lippes red as rose;
His rode is lyk scarlet in grayn,
And I telle you in good certayn,
He hadde a semely nose."

Other, similar toucher carry the burlesque throughout the poem: the "bukke and the hare" as the "wilde bestes" of the forest through which Sir Thopas rode; the "sparhauk and the papejay," as the songsters which charmed his knightly ear. That it was only the degenerate type of romance, however, which provoked Chaucer's satire is clear from the following stanza:

"Men speke of romances of prys,
Of Horn Childe and of Ypotys,
Of Bevis and Sir Gy,
Of Sir Libeux and Pleyn-damour;
But Sir Thopas, he hereth the flour
Of royal chivalry.

Following the burlesque of Sir Thopas it will be interesting to study the Knight's Tale. Here we have a story more typically romance than anything which Chaucer ever produced. In Troilus and Criseyde, a romance theme in a romance setting, we found a realistic drama. We naturally ask, "Why did he not treat this theme in the same manner? The answer to this question will show the neces-

sity of studying the Canterbury Tales in relation to the character of the narrator as described in the General Prologue. This story was told by the knight who "loved chivalrye,

Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye."

What could he more appropriate to the character of the Chaucer's noble knight than a tale which stresses chivalric manners. One would hardly expect from this "verray parfit gentil knight" a story of subtle character analysis or complexity plot. Chaucer very easily adapted the source of the story to his use. For in the Teseide of Boccaccio, his original, Emilie plays a very weak role. She is not the tapestry heroine of Chaucer,for she is conscious of and encourages the love of her two suitors. But although she does possess an individuality it is more adaptable to romance than to dramatic treatment. Therefore we find Chaucer, dealing with a romance theme in a romance manner--a most interesting situation for the study of his narrative methods.

We have just listened to Chaucer's mockery of romance in Sir Thopas. His writing a pure romance then demands an explanation. I think we find this explanation in his artist's nature. Chaucer despised the absurdities of chivalric literature, bht he loved the "chivalric ideal, or rather idealism." We found this true of him in the Vision Poems, and in Troilus and Criseyde, in the character of Troilus particularly. We shall find this attested to by many of the Canterbury Tales. But nowhere so much as in the Knight's Tale is Romance the very spirit of the story. Chaucer seems here to have given himself up to the indulgence of his beauty loving soul. This poem shows that when Chaucer employs romance for its own sake he

chooses its idealism only. In Troilus and Criseyde Chaucer led us rather deeply into conventionalities. But he did so, it will be recalled from a dramatic motive, in order to show their conflict with the realities of life. Here, he has no such serious task. Consequently he seizes the opportunity offered by his theme and depicts that phase of romanticism which appeals to him, its fanciful nature and its beautiful ideals. He is an artist, then, not a romancer. And as such he in no way lays himself open to such satire as he himself has written in Sir Thopas.

It is significant of Chaucer's literary purpose in this poem that he paid greatest attention to its externals, its splendor. Characterization and plot play a comparatively small part. Nowhere else has he paid so much attention to the background of his story. In Troilus and Criseyde, where character was the dominant interest, background, historical background, received little of the poets attention. In the Alceste scene in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, considerable care is given to the creating of pictorial effects as here and there within the Canterbury Tales. But in the Knights' Tale we have preeminently a spectacular story. It must be made clear however, that Chaucer welcomed an opportunity rather than created one for this indulgence of his fancy. He found little in Boccaccio's story to justify the length in which Boccaccio had treated it. Consequently, in making the theme his own, since it was not his habit to supply great deficiencies, he wisely emphasized the finest feature of the original story. The slight success of Fletcher's ambitious dramatization, of this theme has emphasized the soundness of Chaucer's poetic discernment in thus interpreting the Teseide story.

As we have said the Knight's Tale is graphic and scenic from beginning to end. But we may mention as especially fine pictorial scenes: the description of Duke Theseus, the scene of his meeting with the company of sorrowing ladies, the scene of Emelye in the garden, the description of the temples of Mars and Venus, the description of the two warriors who attended the lovers in the tournaments, and, finally the tournament itself. These descriptions are very elaborate and too lengthy to be quoted but we may dwell for a moment upon one or two of them. The meeting of Theseus with the "companye of ladies, 'tweye and tweye'," I think, makes an especially good picture. There in the highway these woful ladies knelt, "clad in clothes blake,""weymentinge"for their dead husbands. As the knight approached, they seized the reins of his bridle and made their plea. There is a kind of decorum about this scene arising from the dignity of the ladies and courtly speeches of Theseus, which gives it the proper romance flavor. The description of Emelye as she does observance to May is a beautiful conventional picture:

"Y-clothed was she fresh, for to devyse;
Hir yellow heer was broyded in a tresse,
Bihinde hir bak, a yerde long I gesse.
And in the garden, at the sonne up-riste,
She walketh up and doun, and as hir liste,
She gadereth floures, partly whyte and rede,
To make a sotil gerland for hir hede,
And as an aungel hevenly she song. (1: 1048-1055.)

The following description of dawn I think is worth quoting:

"The bisy larke, messager of day

Salueth in hir song the morwe gray;
And fyry Phebus ryseth up so brighte,
That al the orient laugheth of the lighte,
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
The silver dropes, hanging on the leves." (1: 1490-1497).

Of quite a different nature from the preceding pictures is the description of the temple of Mars, whither Arcite sought help for the tournament. In this portrayal Chaucer displays his powers of tragedy, admirably. There are everywhere in the temple reminders of bloodshed, murders and dire events. "The smyler with the knyf under the cloke," is a typical line. No less pictorial in effect than the scenes are the speeches. Chaucer employs the courtly rhetoric freely and to good advantage. One can fairly hear the stately sonorous phrases roll off the tongues of his courtiers.

With the exception of Duke Theseus, the characters as we said before, are mere "tapestry people." They are the embodiments of knightly virtue and valor, but they are as Chaucer meant that they should be, ideal, rather than real. Duke Thesus, however is much more realistic. In fact the real interest of the story centers about his character. He is represented as impulsive, pitying and chivalrous. He has a great respect for women which twice in the story is appealed to. One instance we have mentioned, the plea made to him by the "weymentinge women." The other instance was the entreaties of the queen for the lives of Palamon and Arcite whom the king's party discovers fighting in a grove. In both instances Theseus yielded. Chaucer's sympathetic treatment of Theseus as well as of the knight who tells the story, have led some to conclude that

the knight in the person of Theseus was Chaucer's favorite character of the Canterbury group.

Since the Knights' Tale shows little characterization and slight plot and action, one would be inclined to deem it a piece of poor art. And, indeed, judged by modern principles of story writing it is not good. Its very elaborateness is an offense against short story conciseness. Thus we have in the Knights' Tale a signal proof of the fact that the nature of the romances of chivalry led them away from good narrative art as it is now conceived. But we must look at the other side of the question. We have just discussed Chaucer's literary purpose, and we must admit that he accomplished that purpose admirably. Moreover, it exhibits to perfection the modern essential "touch of fantasy." Chaucer then, working in the Knight's Tale with the least tractable of romance forms, does not work servilely. While making concessions to the conventional demands of the type, he has brought to light its one beauty. Chaucer, then, has anticipated Professor Matthews in recognizing a "touch of fantasy" as a narrative essential.

One of the most characteristic features of Mediaeval romances was the element of the marvellous. If trouble presented itself in the lives of lovers, some magic device would be forthcoming to untangle the difficulty. The magic flame and the king's mark of King Horn are typical examples. We have noticed that the touch of magic of the longer romances often formed the theme of shorter tales called märchen. Chaucer, in the Squires Tale is telling a märchen story based probably upon his knowledge of the Cleomades and related folk-tales.[1]

[1] "The Cleomades and Related Folk-Tales." H. S. V. Jones--Modern Language Publications for 1908..

The Squire's Tale is most significant of the diversity of Chaucer's interests, and gives especial emphasis to the fact that we cannot judge Chaucer by any one of his works. Were it not for the Chaucerian style of these stories, we should never associate them with the psychological Troilus and Criseyde and the humorous and realistic Nonne Preestes Tale as products of the same pen. But in the Squire's Tale, Chaucer evinces the same artistic attitude toward the literature of romance, that we noticed in the Knight's Tale.

In the first place I believe his prime object here is the telling of a tale which shall be in keeping with the Squire's character. The squire was only "twenty yeer of age." He was full of the exuberance of life: "Singing he was, or floytinge al the day." He had been "sometyme in chivachye," and had great dreams for the future, "in hope to stonden in his lady grace." No more appropriate tale could have been chosen for this "lusty Squyer." With its wonderful promises of great things to come; of marvellous adventures of wars and love, this story is well calculated to come from such a romantic youth as was Chaucer's Squyer. Chaucer, then, shows his hand at characterization in the very assignment of this tale.

That this story was not unpleasing to the poet, himself, however, I believe his manner of narrating it shows. It is beautiful poetry and moreover is vividly told. I shall point out but a few lines in order to show its character. The following lines describing the feasting of "Cambynskan and his lordes," I think are especially graphic and make us aware of the amused Chaucer in the background. The revellers had feasted until nearly morning when:

"The norice of digestion, the slepe,

Gan on hem winke, and bad them taken kepe,
That muchel drink and labour wolde han reste;
And with a galping mouth hem alle he keste,
And seyde, 'it was tyme to lye adoun,
For blood was in his dominacion;
Cherissheth blood, nature's freend,' quod he.
They thankinge him galpinge, by two, by three,
And every wight gan draw him to his reste,
As slepe hem bad;"

There are many little details that we can see, as, for instance, Canace while walking was attracted by a cry overhead. Looking up, she saw a "faucon" in a tree, that had so beaten herself with her wings, "til the rede blood ran endelong the tree thereas she stood." While the stranger knight demonstrated the manipulation of his magic horse, "Greet was the press, that swarmeth to and fro,

To gauren on this hors that stondeth so."

There are bits of characterization in the poem. Canace appears a real woman because of such strokes as the following: she tookleave of her father early, and went to bed that she might not be, "on the morwe unfestlich for to see;". The following lines not only serve to characterize Canace, but they present a graphic picture:

"And to the tree she gooth ful hastily,
And on this faucon loketh pitously,
And heeld hir lappe abrood, for wel she wiste
The faucon moste fallen fro the twiste,
When that it swouned next for lakke of blood."

No further examples are necessary to show that Chaucer, although he chose in the Squire's Tale one of the "oldest bottles,"

yet poured into it wine of his own vintage. Incomplete[1] as it is, and dealing with a theme so un- modern, it is told in a modern, even in an individualistic style.

Among Mediaeval stories a most interesting group was that of the exempla. While studying its character in a preceding chapter, we found that its field was extensive, including legends, contes devots, fables, any story that would serve the purpose of teaching. Its dedactic nature, we found, imposed upon the story moral digressions that are unpleasant to the reader for pleasure. We found that its didactic nature had also imposed upon it a very concise narrative style. An understanging of this story-type is very necessary in studying Chaucer because much of his narrative has its source in this didactic field. The Frere's Tale is of the exemplum type, the tales of the Marchant, Prioress and Second Nun are derived from legends or contes devots, the Nonne Preestes Tale is a fable, while the tale of Melibeus and the Monks narrative series, are didactic in character. Since we cannot deal with all of these stories in our limited space, I think we may select The Prioress' Tale and the Nonne Preestes Tale as representative of the group and as showing Chaucer's ability to treat diverse human emotions. In judging of their art, we must take into account Chaucer's habit of following his original closely.

The story of the Prioress is one of Chaucer's literary triumphs. It is derived in general from stories told of the custom of the Jews of murdering Christian children. In particular

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[1] Mr. Root suggests that the story is more artistic unfinished, since to a theme so fraught with suggestiveness, the imagination can fit a more appreprìate conclusion.

there is one tale in many versions[1] which tells of the murder of a little boy as the result of his singing a hymn to the Virgin. It is of little relevance here what Chaucer's exact source was. The point of most significance is the place of emphasis of his story. Whereas the current versions stress the cruelty of the Jews, Chaucer has shifted the center of interest to the character of the "litel clergeon," and consequently, gives us a story with a strong human appeal.

That it was in the nature of Chaucer to give us this type of story in his own voice, we have seen while studying his Minor poems. In the case of this tale the character of its narrator adds to its effectiveness. If we turn back to the Prioress' character sketch in the Prologue, we find that she is a gentle, refined lady. Beneath her conventional bearing there is a tender sympathetic nature; "she wolde wepe if that she sawe a mous caught in a trappe." She had little "houndes" for pets, and "sore weep she if oon of hem were deed." Knowing her "pitous" nature we can imagine with what feeling she told of the martyrdom of a "litel child".

The story then, almost loses sight of its more revolting elements. The major part of it is concerned with arousing our sympathy for the little boy. We are asked to follow the details of his school life. We are taken to the school room where he sits at his prymer, "this litel child, his litel book lerninge." We hear him as he learns to sing his Alma redemptoris. We watch the dawning interest of his sensitive soul in regard to the meaning of the song. We are interested by the explanation of it given by his "elder felaw." This boy had heard it sung, he knew it was about a

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[1]This story is the theme of the ballad of Sir Hugh.

lady that they all must "salue," but he was too mechanical a student to do more than memorize: "I lerne song, I can but small grammere," But this crude explanation was enough for the discerning little "innocent." He already knew and loved "Cristes moder," so he eagerly learned the song. It will not be necessary to give more of the story. It is evident where the Prioress' interest lay. She portrays most sympathetically the grief of the "moder," this"newe Rachel"who could scarcely be dragged from the "bere" of her "litel sone." When she comes to the part of the story dealing with the Christian-Jew situation her story loses somewhat of its spirit. But at the last it regains its warm human appeal. As the abbot stands at the coffin of this martyr "souded to virginitee," his "salte teres trickle down as reyn."

The success of the Prioress' Tale is clearly seen in its effect upon the pilgrims:

"When seyd was al this miracle, every man
As sobre was, that wonder was to see."

In fact she had so wrought upon their feelings that the host thought it advisable to "japen," so after some sport at the expense of the "elvish man" he called on him for a story.

The success of the Prioress" Tale consists in Chaucer's ability to "humanize a set literary form." In this story he has given eternal interest to an over-worked plot of local appeal. We might well spend more time upon the more technical narrative features of the Prioress' Tale: its brevity which harmonizes with its tense pathos; Chaucer's devices for creating the proper atmosphere for the story, suggested by his frequent use of the adjective "litel." But

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we must pass on,with the observation that its predominant characteristic, its admirably portrayed pathos, links this story closely with modern fiction.

Now we come to Chaucer's most delightful humor as it is exemplified in the Nonne Preestes' Tale. One suffers a shock of surprise when told that this story was originally a moral story, comparable in a general way to those that are found in the bestiaries of Mediaeval literature. But by the time it came to Chaucer, it had already assumed a literary form, in the Roman du Renart, and the fable of Marie de France. Chaucer preserves the moral at the end of his story, "Lo, swich it is for tc be reccheless,

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Now, gode god, if that it be thy wille,
As seith my lord, so make us alle good men;
And bringe us to his heighe blisse. Amen."

But by means of a dramatic arrangement, clever setting and keen character portrayal, Chaucer has made the fable a work of art.

Of the Canterbury stories so far mentioned, this is the first which has centered about a well defined plot. We noticed that the Knight's Tale was chiefly spectacular; the Squire's Tale romantic. While in the Chanticleer story we have an intrigue which fixes upon it a dramatic structure. I think this fact is very significant of the effect upon Chaucer's art of the type he follows. This tale is the result of French satire. Someone has "japed" at the expense of someone else. The French original presents an intrigue, but Chaucer seizing his opportunity makes his story a dramatic story. He reserves his Reynard till near the end of the tale. The fore

part of the tale he devotes mainly to a setting of the stage and an introduction of the hero and heroine, so that the entrance of the villain will be the more effective.

The story takes place in a widow's barn-yard "enclosed al aboute with stikkes." Chaucer in thus localizing his tale gives it a realism which almost tricks us into forgetting that Chanticleer and Pertelote are only "foules." Their portrayal reinforces this effect. The cock is invested with human vanity and egotism while the hen is represented as a prudent house-wife. As husband and wife they afford the "elvish" man an excellent opportunity to indulge in his habit of jesting in a good humored fashion at the conjugal relation. Our feeling of being in human society while we are among these "briddes" is still further increased by Chaucer's off-hand remark:

"For thilke tyme, as I have understonde,
Bestes and briddes coude speke and singe."

The argument at "daweninge," then,between this husband and wife appears natural. The courtly Chanticleer tells his spouse a dream which visited him in the night and which has caused him no little vexation. This, by the way,is a clever dramatic stroke, for thereby coming trouble is hinted at. After hearing what was the cause of her lord and master's distress, the practical Pertelote cries shame on him "Have ye no manners herte, and han a berd?" It is some constitutional disorder that has caused his bad dreames "douteless." She quotes Cato as proof that one should "do no fors of dremes." What Chanticleer needs, she says, is some laxative herb. She advises him, and here we come to earth again among "<u>foules,</u>" to go to

"yerd" where there is every "erbe," and:

"Pekke hem up right as they grow, and ete hem in."

Chanticleer answers with polite irony, scorning her mention of Cato as an authority on dreams: "Madame, quod he,

Graunt mercy of your lore.
But nathelees, as touching daun Catoun,
That hath of wisdom such a great renoun,
Though that he had no dremes for to drede
By god, men may in olde bokes rede
Of many a man of more auctoritee
Than ever Catoun was."----------

Then he launches into a learned discourse, his pride swelling greater at every word. Thus Chaucer leads us up to the climax. But "pride goeth before a fall," for lo, when at daybreak, this vain cock "rometh amoung his wives alle," looking, "as it were a grim leoun," there comes "a col-fox, ful of sly iniquitee," and carries our hero away. The rout of real people who took after the thieving fox completely,humorously disillusions us,in regard to the grand air of the story. The happy reversal at the close spares the tale the cloud of tragedy. We have but touched upon the clever art of the poem. But if these few remarks have served to indicate further what Chaucer could do with the Mediaeval story, they have served their purpose.

The lai holds higher rank than the legend, among the narrative forms of romance fiction. We found this exemplified in the lais of Marie de France. Though often rivalled by the more didactic story in the matter of a firmly knit plot, it deals of course with

more courtly themes. The lai has borrowed the finest element of the romance chivalric idealism, and treated it with the concise art of the fabliau or exemplum. Thus we have in the lai the happy combination of fantasy and narrative art, a combination rare in both romance and legend. Chaucer's great romance, the Knight's Tale, thoroughly bears out this statement. Knowing Chaucer's ability to bring out the best features of his models, we should expect something gratifying in his two lais. The first one of these stories is told by the Wife of Bath, the other by the Franklin. It is interesting to note in passing that these lais open and close,the so-called "marriage group" of Chaucer's collection. The Wife of Bath's story is good in itself, but it derives its greatest interest and point in the story from its connection with its interesting narrator. I shall take this occasion, therefore, to give a short sketch of the Wife of Bath, merely quoting what Professor Lounsbury has said of her story. I think I can bring out in the Franklin's Tale, Chaucer's treatment of the lai. Of the Wife's lai, Professor Lounsbury says: "The tale is full of wisest observation, of keenest insight into characer and motive. The incidents, moreover, are woven together so artistically and follow each other so naturally, that the reader loses sight or thought of the central impossibility that lies at the foundation of the details which have been built upon it. More than all, the story, starting from the earth, lifts inself up to, and loses itself in that poetical atmosphere to which nothing but the highest genius can attain."[1]

A story of so high a type, coming from the woman characterized in the following lines has an air of the incongruous:

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[1] "Studies in Chaucer." III. p. 418.

"Hir coverchiefs ful fyne were of ground;
I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound.
Than on a Sonday were upon hir heed
Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
Ful streit y-teyd, and shoes ful moiste and newe.
Bold was hir face, and fair and reed of hewe.
She was a worthy womman al hir lyve,
Housbaondes at chirche-dore she hadde fyve."

That she was, at the least unrefined, as these lines imply, her Prologue further makes evident. Yet she expresses sentiments and regrets which lead one to believe that she had in her character possibilities of a very different sort. I believe we can see in the Wife of Bath the tragedy of the woman of lower rank in the days of romance, just as in the character of Criseyde, we witness the tragedy, in the same period of the lady of chivalry. Contemporary history bears out this opinion.[1] Chaucer has given us the combination of her description in the General Prologue, her own views expressed in the Prologue to the tale she tells, and the tale itself, from which to study her. From Chaucer's description of her, we get the impression of a jolly, much-travelled woman, whose chief asset is her fund of love lore: "For she coude of that art the olde daunce." From her own prologue, we get a better impression, not of her character, but of the possibilities of her character. She shows frankness and common sense and --a dissatisfaction with her way of life. If she has lost all modesty it is because of her bitterness at having missed real joy: "Allas! allas! that ever love was sinne!" Her regret at her passing youth is truly pathetic:

1"Chaucer and His England." Chap. XVI., G. G. Coulton.

"But age, allas! that al wol enveyme,
Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith;
Lat go, fare-wel, the devel go therwith!
The flour is goon, ther is na-more to telle,
The bren, as I best can, now moste I selle;
But yet to be right mery wol I fonde."

When we read her lai,we feel sure of her sincere regret of her past. If she had been at heart a bold woman she would have told a different tale than this chivalric romance whose "gentilesse" is her chief interest. The character of the Wife of Bath is alone a work of art. If we must pass by many another fine characterization within the Canterbury pages, this is testimony of what Chaucer can accomplish in the way of psychological character study.

The Frankelyn calls his tale a Breton lai, and we will take his word for its source. It is a tale of love complicated by a point of courtly honor. From this, its courtly character is obvious. Chaucer is once more therefore, applying his individualistic narrative method to a chivalric theme. We have not time for careful discussion of the story. We may mention at the outstart then, the signal features which mark the narration of the Franklin's "Breton lai," devoting the following remarks mainly to these points. These features are two: the portrayal of love in marriage, as the ideal love relation, and a firmly articulated plot.

In this story, Chaucer, has at last the opportunity of taking a stand in regard to courtly ethics. In the Knight's Tale, he is perforce, the artist drawing what he sees. In Troilus and Criseyde he is the dramatist. Here, he is somewhat of a moralist,

insofar as he honors happy wedded life. He does this in opposition to chivalric custom which did not carry love over into the wedded relation. The romance of Enid by Chrestien de Troyes is the exception which proves the rule in regard to the love relation in Chivalric literature. Chaucer, is not wholly a moralist, however, in this stand he takes. Since the complicating force of the story is a matter of chivalric honor, the willingness, on the part of Averagus to surrender his lawful wife for the sake of "Trouthe, the hyeste thing that men may save," ennobles his knightly character the more, and dignifies the entire tone of the story.

The plot of this story is one of tragic irony. Dorigen, the noble wife grieving in the absence of her husband, is annoyed by the attentions of the young Squire, Aurelius. Finally, thinking all the while of her husband's danger in crossing the sea she answers Aurelius impatiently:

"Sin I you see so pitously complayne;
Loke what day that, endelong Britayne,
Ye remove alle the rokkes, stoon by stoon,
That they ne lette ship ne boot to goon--
I seye, whan ye han maad the coast so clene
Of rokkes, that ther nis no stoon y-sene,
Than wol I love yow best of any man."

When, by "magik naturel," he is able to meet her challenge, Dorigen has to face the situation of "trouthe" versus love. By virtue of the excellent plot conduct, Averagus, very naturally accomplishes his return, at the tragic moment of Dorigen's distress. We have mentioned his decision in the matter. Not only does it dignify his

character but that of Aurelius also. That Aurelius will give up a claim which according to chivalric standards was just, and which the knight unhesitatingly acknowledged, ennobles his character. Dorigen as beloved by two such worthy men, appears thereby the more precious possession. If we compare this noble story with the conventional "debat" or problem lai from which it is derived, we will appreciate the more, Chaucer's narrative skill. For, while conforming to the original plot and courtly ethics, he has given us a story, modern in style and tone.

In classifying Mediaeval stories earlier in this paper we recognized the old French fabliaux as more nearly corresponding to Chaucer's art. We did this advisedly, for eight out of his twenty-three Canterbury stories are derived from fabliaux sources. It is well known that the fabliaux tended to coarseness. But it by no means follows from this that Chaucer's typical story is coarse. I have endeavored to show, in the course of this paper, that Chaucer's purpose in writing was a literary one. It is characteristic of him that he found the artistic possibility in every plot. It is not strange therefore, that he found among the bourgeois the most perfect narrative form of Mediaeval fiction, for they had long lost faith in chivalry; consequently their reflective and satirical attitude toward the vanities of life had developed a keenness to which the fabliau is indebted for its clever art. That his fabliaux are immoral is not his fault. He is simply telling what "these olde bookes say." Moreover, that he is telling them not for the subject matter, but for their cleverness, is evident from his construction. The following paragraphs from a comparative study of the Reeve's

Tale and the Fabliaux by Walter Morris Hart,[1] will show clearly the relations between Chaucer's fabliaux and the bourgeois fabliaux, and between these, in turn, and the Modern Short Story:

"Comparing the results of the foregoing analyses, one finds that Chaucer may have learned, not only his story, but also some important elements of his technique, from the fabliau. The interest in the every day life of bourgeois or peasant society, seen in its commonplace surroundings, in its local color, is already there: so that Chaucer, in one of the most English tales of his period may have imitated (as genius imitates) a French interest, a French point of view. The strict unity of time and the virtue of brevity, rare in Mediaeval literature, are already there. Neatness of structure, too, clear relation of part to part, excellent proportion and emphasis, skilful handling of synchronous events, Chaucer may have learned from the fabliau. The fabliau is not without evidence that the author grasped the story as a whole, saw the end, and prepared for it from the beginning. And it may have taught Chaucer something in the way of rapid, realistic dialogue. It may have taught him dramatic impersonality, objectivity, absence of attitude toward his characters. It may have taught him the comic possibilities of intrigue. And he may have learned from it the tendency toward proverbial comment upon life. In both Chaucer's tale and the fabliau, finally, we have the same fitness of style to subject-matter; in coarseness of expression there is nothing to choose between them.

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[1] Modern Language Publications. 1908.

Not only in its unity,--of time, of place of action, of plot of characters, of impression.--but also in its concreteness, does the Reeve's Tale anticipate the modern short story. It is dramatic in its use of dialogue to carry on the action, to suggest character or past events; in its wealth of vivid and concrete incident and detail; in its tendency to avoid analysis or epithet, to depend rather upon words, actions, dress, effect upon others, to indicate character or emotion.

If this chapter on the narrative art of the Canterbury Tales, has shown Chaucer's ability to produce artistic stories from Mediaeval fiction, it has served its general purpose. If it has demonstrated a tendency of his art to work within the larger limitations set by his source, to be good or better according to the narrative type of his source--romance, märchen, legend, lai or fabliau--, it has served its secondary purpose.

It is regretted that many excellent features of this delightful part of Chaucer's works had to be passed by. The character of Constance, for instance, one of Chaucer's greatest achievements, and the Pardoner's Tale, are especially worthy of mention. The carefully and swiftly developed plot of the Pardoner's Tale, a fabliau story, and its ominous atmosphere, perfectly hormonizing with, and intensifying the tone of the story, are fine art. But we are content if the examples that have been cited have served to reveal the skill of a master story teller.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In the opening chapter of this paper we discussed the narrative art of the Modern Short Story. We discovered that the short story is a distinct literary genre, marked by characteristics peculiar to its nature. These characteristics, compression, originality, ingenuity, and a touch of fantasy, to use Professor Matthews' terms, are the fundamental principles of plot conduct, of character drawing, and of the management of setting. Finally, we found that good short story writing is saved from mere mechanics by the leaven of the writer's genius; that it is a highly conscious art reflecting the personality of the story writer.

We next surveyed the narrative of the Middle Ages, taking up first the epic, then the romance period. We found the epic period distinguised by a dignified, sincere literature of heroic deeds and valor. We noticed in the constructive art of this literature a marked unity, a directness of expression, and a lofty beauty. The modern narrative elements were plainly anticipated in the vigorous dramatic tendencies of the epic style. Studying the popular ballad in connection with heroic poetry, on the presumption that it is a progenitor of the epic, we observed the same narrative tendencies in cruder, more naïve form. In the ballad type, however, we found a marked absence of individual expression. The songs being group compositions, the expression of the folk in chorus, of a homogeneous

life, show no touch of an artist's hand. In the epic type we found this less and less true. In fact, the grand and sombre cast of the atmosphere of Beowulf seems clear proof that this poem as we have it, is the product of a single mind. The similarity in structural methods of modern fiction and ballad and earlier epic fiction, we found easy of explanation. Both are marked by a directness of aim. This directness of aim of present day literature results we have seen, from the sincere expression of individual personalities. While in ballad literature it results from the sincere expression of a homogeneous folk. The better art of epics like Beowulf came of the distinctive style of an individual authorship, while the perfected art of the modern short story comes from the consciously directed effort of the individual author. We concluded then that the dramatic qualities of heroic literature were the reflection of the candor of heroic life, while the naivete of its style was due to a lack of conscious direction. Romance literature, we found to be a sort of negative proof of the preceding conclusion. As chivalric society was complex and insincere, the chivalric romance was elaborated and artificial. In its beautiful ideals, its splendor and its character of marvel and enchantment, however, we found the source of a most valuable contribution to later literature,--Professor Matthews' " "touch of fantasy." We found also a tendency to better narrative art in the shorter tales of romance,--the märchen, legend, lai, and, finally the clever fabliau.

Following this discussion we attempted to explain, in a general way, Chaucer's attitude toward contemporary life and literature. Living in the fourteenth century he came into contact with one of the most interesteing periods of English history. As comptrl

er of customs at the port of London, he became thoroughly acquainted with conditions of the various classes of English society. As foreign diplomat he came to have a broader knowledge of men and events and especially of literature. We found evidence that he was not insensible to the distress and evils of his time nor lacking in the patriotism which was beginning to stir in every breast. Yet his writing is purely impersonal. More than that, his pages do not even give a faithful picture of what he saw and heard. Unlike all other Mediaeval writers, he dared, by changes, to adapt his material to his literary design. We found Chaucer assuming this same independent attitude toward the literature of his day. He scorned its artificialities, but, with artistic discernment, he recognized the literary value of its fantasy and its beautiful ideals. This discriminating manner of Chaucer and his habit of idealizing the commonplace, led us to the conclusion that Chaucer is a poet whose works make a universal appeal.

We found this conclusion verified in the Minor Poems, for, although the earlier lyrics are very imitative of French style, still the productions of this period are transitional. They show an increasingly individualistic method. We selected, for study the Vision Poems, because of their more dramatic structure. We found in them marked tendencies toward Chaucer's mature artistic work. In the knight's description of his lady, from the Book of the Duchess, we found very realistic touches, which showed, moreover, a sense of dramatic structure in striking contrast to its French model. In the Hous of Fame we found suggestions of Chaucer's greater literary independence. His terse answers in his dialogue with the eagle are

indicative of the realistic dialogues of the Canterbury Tales. The clever burlesque upon Mediaeval love debats in the Parlement of Foules is clear evidence of Chaucer's impersonal and artistic interest in writing. The Legend of Good Women is the climactic achievement, we found, of this early period. The dramatic ability there displayed is a foretaste of what the Canterbury Tales would bring.

Although Troilus and Criseyde was written in the transitional period, before the Legend of Good Women,we found that it shows Chaucer's dramatic genius at its best. He took Boccaccio's story and dressed it up in Mediaeval garb. But his object was neither the telling of the story, nor the portraying of chivalric life. By bringing into conflict with a world of superficialities, real people with human emotions, he has given us a great tragedy of romantic realism which every age must honor.

In the Canterbury Tales we found the greatest diversity of Chaucer's talents. We saw him dealing with humor, with pathos, with tragedy; we watched him reworking every type of romance literature, and descending, even, to the bourgeois ranks in order to reproduce their rude jests. But we could always distinguish the hand of Chaucer as he made the most stereotyped plot his own. He was always the artist. We brought out in this section Chaucer's characteristic manner of detecting the best points in every story type and improving upon them. We attempted to do this by arranging a rough scale of excellence of the Canterbury Tales according to their development from the romance, märchen, legend, lai. Finally, we concluded that Chaucer's narrative was most perfect in the French favliau style. For there his dramatic powers, his powers of humor

and of characterization have the freest play. In other words, the fabliau, coming from the bourgeois class was free from romantic conventions. With the fabliau as a model, therefore, Chaucer's spirit untrammeled, had a chance to direct his art as he chose. Consequently, we have in his fabliau type of story, a story coarse in tone, it is true, but in narrative art, in "compression, originality, ingenuity and--a touch of fantasy," a story which falls not far short of the artistic Short Story of today. In conclusion we may say that Chaucer, working in an age noted for its servility to form, and dealing with literary types preeminently artificial, has nevertheless won for himself a rank among creative poets; that his genius, combining the virile art of epic and the fantasy of the romance with a method of his own which foreshadows the conscious art of the present, has made him one of the world's greatest literary artists.

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